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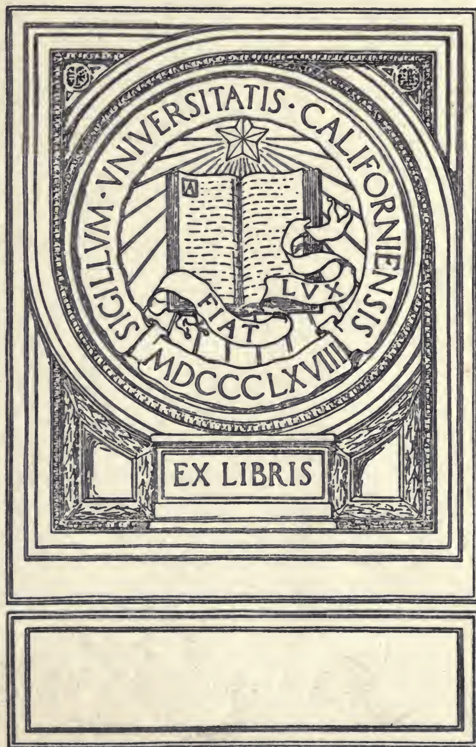

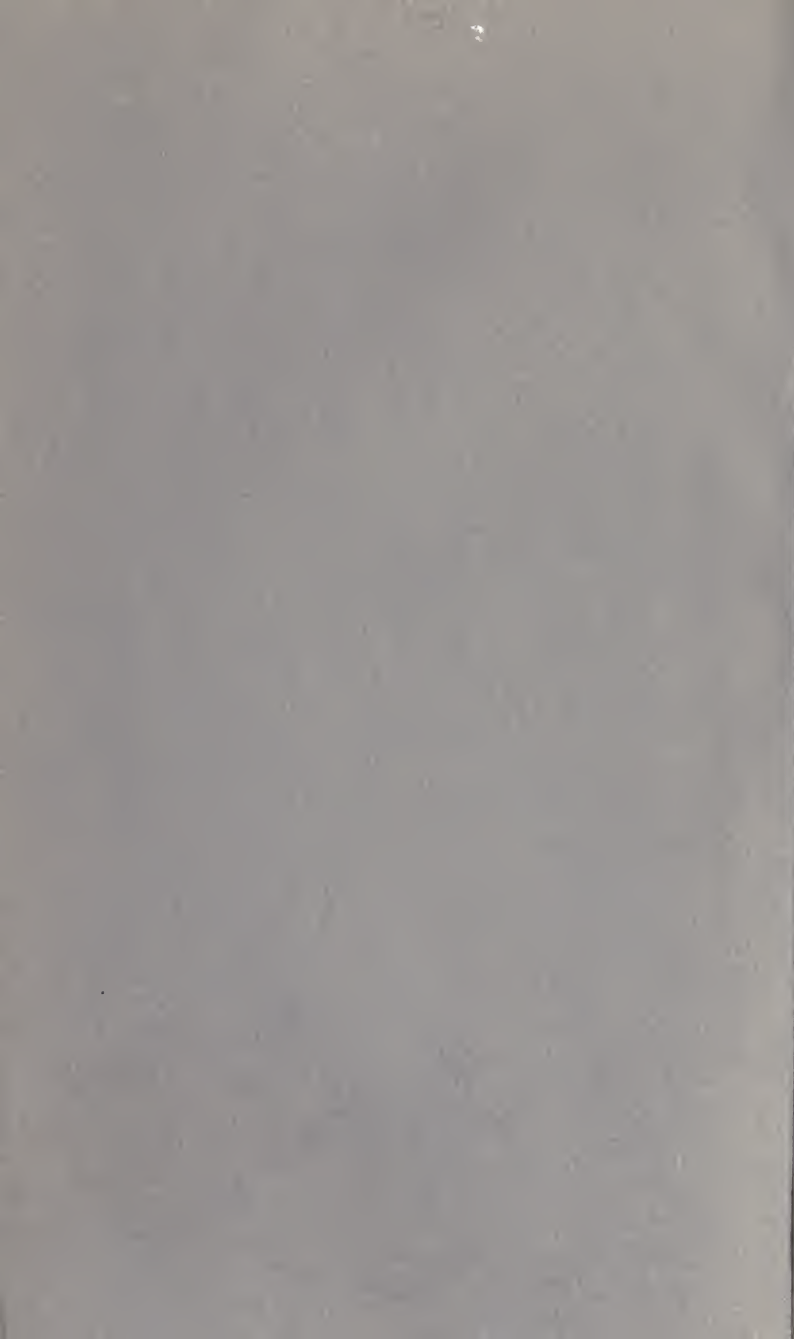

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The Foundations of English Literature

A Study of the Development of English Thought and Expression from Beowulf to Milton

By

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PREFACE

THE object of this book is to present a careful study of the origins of English literature, and to trace its development up to the time when it assumed its permanent form. The author has attempted to show that the literature of England has been a gradual growth; that it has flowed out of the national life and is inseparably intertwined with the national history; that its development has been constant and consecutive from the very first, and that it commences not with Chaucer but with the primal poetry. The accumulation of a mass of names and dates, of biographical matter and encyclopædic information, has not been attempted. All writers who were not materially concerned in the evolution of the literature have been omitted. The book is not "a storehouse of facts"; its aim is rather to clear away the confusing mass of details which has grown up about the subject and to expose the main outlines, to trace causes and effects, and to show that no author and no period exist as isolated phenomena, but that they are merely natural results of previous conditions.

An attempt has been made to study the growth of the English spirit and to weigh all influences that have prominently affected it in any way. The civil and religious history of England has been kept constantly in view. The spirit of the age, the condition and the temper of all classes of the people, the gradual development of new ideals and of new institutions, the various influences that have come from other lands to mold and to

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modify the native characteristics, have all been carefully noted at every step of the work.

The author believes that there is no other way to understand fully the literature and the intellectual life of a people; nor is he alone in this view. "There is no greater desideratum in our literature at present," says a recent English critic, "than a complete and able account of the history of English literature in which the connection between the literary and political history of our country shall be fully dealt with." While the author of this book does not for an instant presume to assert that it is the work demanded above, he does maintain that it is written from the right standpoint. It has attempted to cover only the foundation period; it closes with the great era of Shakespeare and Milton, when the language and the literature and the people had settled into their permanent forms. The whole subject of English literature is too large to be covered in a single session: it is better to study it by periods, and the foundation period is the first well rounded unity.

In the words of Saintsbury, "None but a charlatan will pretend that he has written, and none but a very unreasonable person will expect any one else to write, a history of the kind free from blunders." The author will esteem it a favor if all who detect errors will communicate them to him. An attempt has been made to base all facts upon reliable authorities. The chronology has been founded as far as possible upon Ryland's *Chronological Outlines*, and upon Green's *Short History;* the biographical data have been taken in each case from the most recent authorities, and quotations and estimates have been based upon the latest reprints and editions. The sincere thanks of the author are due to Mr. A. H. Espenshade, of the English department of the Pennsylvania State College,

for help upon the proof and for valuable suggestions. Acknowledgments are also due to Jno: Lesslie Hall for extracts from his translation of *Beowulf;* and to Charles Scribner's Sons; G. P. Putnam's Sons; Ginn & Co.; Longmans, Green & Co.; Cassell & Co.; Houghton, Mifflin & Co.; Harper & Brothers, and others for permission to make brief quotations from their publications.

F. L. P.

STATE COLLEGE, PA.,
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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

EVERY careful teacher of literary history has realized keenly the truth of Ten Brink's remark that "the beginner needs a guide in the labyrinth of literature about literature." Such a wilderness of criticism and commentary, of history and biography, of description and conjecture has grown up about the subject of English literature that even the most experienced worker is often bewildered. It is to furnish some clue to this labyrinth that a select list of authorities has been prefixed to every chapter and division of this book.

There has been no attempt at exhaustive bibliographies. The practical value of every reference has been carefully considered, as well from the standpoints of the availability of the book referred to and its adaptation to the needs of beginners, as from that of absolute worth. Often the highest authorities on a subject, the works that alone would interest the special student, have not been mentioned at all. The publications of the Early English Text Society, for instance, of the Chaucer and Shakespeare Societies and kindred organizations, the issues of the Master of the Rolls, and the costly reprints of old books, although of untold value to the specialist, have, for obvious reasons, been omitted. The student, if he needs them, can find them in the large libraries.

Another group of authorities that has been neglected is that list of indispensable reference works that every student of English literature should have constantly

within reach. The minimum list of such helps should contain these indispensable works:

The Encyclopædia Britannica.
The Library of British Biography.
Allibone's *Dictionary of Authors.*
Ryland's *Chronological Outlines of English Literature.*
Morley's *English Writers.*
Ten Brink's *English Literature* (Earliest Times to Surrey).
Minto's *Characteristics of the English Poets.*
" *Manual of English Prose Literature.*
Ward's *English Poets.*
Craik's *English Prose.*
Green's *Short History of the English People.*
Traill's *Social England.*

Taine's *English Literature* should be within easy reach, but it must be read with caution,—it is intoxicating.

The student should constantly remember that the text-book is simply a guide, and that he should in every case consult as many authorities upon every topic as his time and opportunities will allow.

The Foundations of English Literature

CHAPTER I

THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF BRITAIN

The Element of Insularity. "Britain," says Shakespeare in *Cymbeline*, "is a world by itself." It stands, he says,

> As Neptune's park, ribbed and paled in
> With rocks unscalable and roaring waters.

Again he alludes to it in *Richard II.* as

> This fortress built by Nature for herself
> Against infection and the hand of war,
> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> Which serves it in the office of a wall
> Or as a moat defensive to a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands,
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

This fact of the insularity of Britain has been the dominating element in its history. Although the Strait of Dover at its narrowest point is only twenty miles in width, it formed for centuries an almost impassable barrier between the island and the continent. No rougher and more treacherous body of water than this strait and

the adjacent seas can anywhere be found. The tides in places rise more than twenty-five feet, and they sweep with fury through the Channel. The North Sea, everywhere shallow and full of reefs, is subject to sudden tempests, the terror of seamen. When Cæsar attempted the subjugation of Britain, one of these storms swept away his transports, and a little later a high tide, together with a sudden tempest, shattered the greater part of his fleet. Any force save a Roman one under a general like Cæsar would have been destroyed by such a disaster. The second expedition was delayed three weeks by fierce winds, and after it had reached Britain forty transports were wrecked by a sudden gale. When Claudius had determined upon the conquest of the island he found the Roman army in a state of mutiny. For a time it utterly refused to invade a land protected by such fierce and treacherous seas.

This insularity of Britain, keeping it free during its early history from a mixing of foreign elements, has allowed it to evolve a strongly marked individuality, unlike that of any other nation of Europe. From the English conquest to the Norman, a period of six centuries, Britain received, with one striking exception,—the introduction of Christianity,—almost nothing from across the Channel. While all Europe was a kaleidoscope of shifting boundaries, mixing races, changing institutions and tongues, England was working out its problem practically alone, almost as if it were an island in the unknown Pacific.

Size and Contour. (**Milner,** *The British Islands.*) The area of Britain, when compared with that of the other great powers, is almost insignificant. England alone is smaller than the single State of North Carolina; com-

bined with Wales it is somewhat larger than the States of New York and New Jersey. In shape the island is like a distorted pear, or an irregular triangle with a base of 320 miles and an altitude of some 560 miles. Its contour is remarkable. The sea not only girdles it but indents it with numberless bays and estuaries which give to the island a coast-line three times as long in proportion to the land surface as that of any other nation of Europe. There is no spot on the entire island more than one hundred miles from tide-water. The island was made by nature for the home of ships; an eyrie for the sea eagles, for the rulers of the Atlantic. The storm-beaten seas about it, fierce and treacherous, have been the training-school for the sailors of the world.

The estuaries of Britain played an important part during the conquests. They admitted the enemy's ships into the very heart of the island. They were the cause, too, of some of the earlier subdivisions. Draw a line between the Friths of Forth and Clyde, another from the Humber to the Mersey, and a third from the Thames to the mouth of the Severn, and you will indicate in a rough way the boundaries of the three rival kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex.

The English Landscape. From the eastern shore, which in early years was lined with broad marshes, covered at low tide but now rescued from the sea, the land gradually rises with a pleasant alternation of valley and hill, until it culminates in a low mountain chain extending the entire length of the western coast. These mountains, which in Scotland and Wales become wild and broken, account for a great part of the present race distribution. The territory north of the Friths was never

permanently conquered even by Rome, nor were the Welsh ever dislodged from the mountains of the western border. To this day the people of Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall are prevailingly Celtic.

Modern England is a garden; hedgerows cover it as with a net; almost every acre of it is utilized. The soil has had its own influence upon the molding of the English mind. It brings forth abundantly, but success comes only through skill, and watchfulness, and resolute toil. It repays what is expended upon it, but it lavishes no unearned gifts. Wrestling for centuries with such a glebe has bred in the English yeoman that dogged perseverance, that ability to do hard work long continued, that frugality and hard-headed sagacity which to-day form such conspicuous elements in his character.

"*A Manly Climate.*" The British Isles lie in almost the same latitude as Labrador, yet, owing to the warm current of the Gulf Stream, the climate is more like that of the Southern Middle States of America. Proximity to the sea assures abundant moisture. It rains sometimes for weeks at a time, and dense fogs, especially in winter, drift in from the ocean. This element of fog and rain has been carried to an extreme by Taine, who saw in it an explanation for much of the gloom and the seriousness of the English character. But, taken for all in all, few countries in the world have a more "manly climate." It is seldom warm enough to be enervating; it has no sharp extremes; it invites constantly to vigorous and exhilarating exercise in the open air. In the words of one of the English kings, "There is no other country where outdoor exertion may be taken for so many days in the year, and for so many hours in the day." The Eng-

lish have always been a robust race, with large and powerful bodies, with enormous appetites—great fighters and hunters, ready for anything that has in it a spice of danger and of hardship.

This Element of Environment must be kept constantly in mind as we study the intellectual life and the literature of England. The insularity of Britain has led inevitably to an insular view of life. The Englishman is self-satisfied, liable to violent prejudices, intolerant, overbearing. Born within sound of the sea, he easily becomes a mariner. He has deep in his soul the vague longing, the feeling of mystery, the sadness, which a life by the ocean always brings. His struggle with a stubborn soil has made him obstinate, industrious, a man of immense recoil. He has been a healthy man with a perfect digestion, and we find that his view of life, while often gloomy, is seldom morbid and jaundiced. His writings are prevailingly sane and wholesome. They abound in a flow of healthy animal spirits, they are intensely human; everywhere are expressed a love of action, a sense of freedom, a fierce intolerance of oppression. The long residence of the English in their narrow island and in an earlier home which resembled it in many respects, has given them a marked individuality. It is hard to find a people more completely the product of its environment.

CHAPTER II

PRE-ENGLISH BRITAIN

COMPARED with most of the other nations of Europe, England has had a short history. The island first emerges from the mists of fable and conjecture about the time of the Christian Era. The year 55 B.C., when Cæsar first tried to add it to the Roman Empire, is the earliest authentic date. It was then peopled by Celts, and as this race became an important element in the formation of the English people, we will take a swift glance at their more marked characteristics.

The Celts. (**Rhys,** *Celtic Britain;* **Skene,** *Celtic Scotland;* **Morley,** *English Writers,* I.; **Matthew Arnold,** *Celtic Literature;* **Wright,** *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon;* **Azarius,** *Development of Old English Thought.*) As described by the Roman historians, who are almost our only authorities, the primitive Britons, while mainly of Celtic blood, were by no means a homogeneous people, with unvarying physical characteristics, as were the early Angles and Saxons. Two main branches have been recognized: the Gaels, who included the Irish and the Scottish Highlanders, and the Cymry, or Welsh, of whom there were at least seven widely different tribes. These divisions account for the civil strife which was the curse of the Celt as it was afterwards of the Teuton. Petty jealousies and feuds kept the flames of war ever burning; even when threatened with extermination by the Roman

and the Saxon, the Welsh could not unite forces, and each invaded section fought its fight alone.

The individuality of these Celtic Britons was as marked and persistent as was that of the Teutons, their neighbors across the North Sea. The two races were in many ways supplements of each other. The Teutons were stolid, undemonstrative, and serious. They were not quick to anger, but when once aroused their wrath was implacable. They could bide their time; they were tenacious of purpose, and not easily discouraged. They were fatalists: their view of life was dark and cheerless. The Celts, however, were vivacious and imaginative. Brave even to recklessness, they were unstable and easily discouraged. "When injured," says Tacitus, "their resentment is quick, sudden, and impatient"; but they harbored no lasting resentments. They were sanguine and confident, yet their ardor soon cooled. Time and again during the conquest they failed because they neglected to follow up an advantage. They were a light-hearted people: the word "fun" is one of the few additions that they have made to our vocabulary. They were singularly sensitive to things of beauty. Music especially delighted them; the harp to this day is the emblem of Ireland. Their religion, while cruel and revolting in some of its phases, was full of poetry and mysticism, and was peculiarly fitted to impress the imagination. In literature the Celts had made considerable advances even before the English conquest. Their ritual, which perished with the Druids, was in itself a literature. While the Teutons were shouting wild songs of battle and booty, the Celts were weaving prose romances of love and fairy-land, of Arthur and Merlin, and making a literature

so full of beauty and of true creative energy that it has been the inspiration of all the great English poets of later days. Thus the Celtic element has had a marked influence upon the formation of the English character. Without it England might have become another Holland, —stolid, industrious, ponderous, serious,—without humor or fancy.

In temperament, manner of thought, and mode of expression, no two peoples could better present a type of permanent contrast, or preserve those idiosyncrasies which when stimulated against each other by national rivalry (as in France and Germany) tend only to discord and distrust, but when blended (as in Britain) are the foundation of national stability, whether in action, art, or letters. The masculine tenderness of the Teuton, the feminine of the Celt; the affection for nature, associated in the Teuton with love of exercise and the open air, in the Celt with spiritual sympathy; the epic impressiveness of the Teuton, and the dramatic effectiveness of the Celt; the elaborate synthesis and detail of the first, with the conciseness and grasp of principle of the other; the complex style of the Teuton and the nervous utterance of the Celt; the mysticism of the Teuton where the Celt is realistic, his seriousness where the Celt is sportive and fanciful—these are some of the qualities which go to make up the richness of the literature, and are so important in conjunction because so complementary to each other.—*Renton.*

SUGGESTED READING. Lanier's *The Boy's Mabinogion.*

The Roman Domination. (**Lappenberg,** *Anglo-Saxon Kings,* Part I.; **Green,** *The Conquest of England;* **Coote,** *The Romans of Britain.*) The so-called conquest of Britain by Cæsar in 55 and 54 B.C. was by no means a significant event. Like a band of pirates the Romans landed, burned, plundered, and sailed away, leaving behind them no noticeable results save a small area of ruin. For nearly a century the Britons went on as before, unmolested by Rome. They increased their commerce

with the continent; London and other towns sprang into prominence as commercial centers; and under Cymbeline, the father of the noted chief Caractacus, the whole island arrived at something like a centralized government. Civilization was increasing rapidly, and the natives were becoming, as Shakespeare declares,

> Men more order'd than when Julius Cæsar
> Smiled at their lack of skill, but found their courage
> Worthy his frowning at.

In 43 A.D., the Emperor Claudius determined upon the conquest of the island toward which the Romans had cast longing eyes for nearly a century. Forty years of stubborn warfare followed, during which one tribe after another was crushed by the Roman legions, until the final battle with the Caledonians left Britain so thoroughly conquered that it remained in comparative peace during the next three centuries.

43. Roman Invasion of Britain.
50. Defeat of Caractacus.
61. Destruction of the Druids. Revolt of Boadicea.
78–84. Administration of Agricola.
84. Complete Submission of Britain.

The same methods that had made France and Spain so thoroughly Roman were at once applied to the conquered province. Military roads were constructed in every direction, making it easy to mass troops at short notice in any quarter of the island. Towns were fortified and garrisoned, and within the protected area there sprang up temples and baths, palaces and other splendid structures, filled with all the appliances and luxuries of Roman civilization. Harbors were dredged, marshes drained, and the soil tilled by scientific methods. Thus passed three hundred years. At the opening of the fifth cen-

376. Invasion of Visigoths.
395. Final Division of the Empire.

410. Sack of Rome by Alaric.
451. Invasion of the Huns under Attila.
455. Sack of Rome by the Vandals.
476. Fall of the Empire of the West. Beginning of the Middle Ages.

tury the Teutonic tribes of Western Europe began to press upon Rome until the city was forced to battle for mere existence. The more distant provinces of the Empire began to be abandoned; little by little the army was called from Britain. By 409, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the greater part of the Roman population had left the island.

Aside from purely physical changes, the Roman occupation of Britain left few permanent marks. Notwithstanding the fact that during three centuries, a period longer than that since the settlement of America, Romans and Britons lived side by side, that every effort was made to force the natives into the towns and to teach them the Latin language and literature, at the close of the period the territory outside the fortified cities was almost as Celtic as before the conquest. The Latin language was spoken in the island much as English is spoken at the present time in India,—to some extent in the cities, but scarcely at all in the country. As the Angles and Saxons fell with peculiar ferocity upon Roman towns and in most cases utterly destroyed them with their inhabitants, they thus took the most effective means possible for stamping out the last vestiges of Latin civilization. The period of the Roman domination, therefore, need not detain us, since it affected very little the subsequent history of Britain.

Required Reading. Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, III., I.

The Barbarian Age. During her whole history Rome, with her outlying provinces, was an area of civilization

surrounded by an unbroken circle of barbarism. It was like an artificial province rescued by dykes from the sea. The waters are kept at bay only by ceaseless toil and vigilance; they never sleep, but are constantly gnawing at the embankments, ready at any moment to rush in at the weakest point and engulf the whole. While Rome was in her strength there was no danger, but when, weakened by excesses and political corruption, she lost her power, the whole barbarian world began to close in upon her. It was so in Britain. During the Roman supremacy the wild tribes of Scotland and the North of Ireland had been held back. Time and again had it taken the whole force of the army to drive them over the border. So persistent were these attacks that the Romans in self-defense built at two different points massive walls across the entire frontier. The eastern coast, also, had been rendered safe only by constant vigilance. Bands of Saxon pirates, even as early as the middle of the third century, had poured from the lowlands of North Germany, and had kept the entire coast-line in terror. So serious did this danger become that the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian appointed a "Count of the Saxon Shore," whose whole duty it was to fortify the coast and to ward off the attacks of these marauders.

No sooner had the Roman legions departed from the island than the barbarians began to close in upon it. First came the fierce tribes from Ireland and Scotland, and shortly afterwards came the Saxon pirates so long kept at bay. Well might they look with eager eyes upon Britain. It had been rich enough to tempt the Romans, and to keep them for five centuries, and it had grown constantly richer with every year since the con-

quest of Agricola. Nor was it plunder alone that tempted these wild seamen. The island was a natural fortress, such as their own land, open on the south, could never be. It was made by nature as the home of sea kings; whoever ruled it would be ruler of the North Sea and of the Eastern Atlantic.

The Britons fought desperately, but they lacked unity and leadership. It is a mistaken idea that they had lost their old spirit and that they were without arms. It took a century and a half of almost constant fighting for the English to gain even the eastern side of the island. Every foot of ground was heroically contested, sometimes several times over. No more stubborn resistance was ever made by an invaded people.

As these pirates from the North of Europe became the founders of the modern English nation, we will stop at this point to make a careful study of their early environment, their habits, their institutions, their temper, and their view of life.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIMITIVE ENGLISHMAN

The Land. If one examine a map of the Danish peninsula (see *Century Dictionary Atlas*), he will note that it lies like a long finger slightly curved and pointing at the coast of Sweden. It is comparatively narrow, averaging not over fifty miles in width; it is jagged everywhere with bays and studded with islands. It has three divisions: Jutland, Schleswig, and Holstein, which correspond roughly with the territories once occupied by the Jutes, the Angles, and the Saxons. The little province between the towns of Flensburg and Schleswig still bears the name of Angeln, or England. The land of the Jutes was a fen country with vast swamps and dense forests; the southern half of the peninsula, although bordered by wide sea-marshes, rose into low, heath-clad hills well fitted for flocks and herds; while the Saxon territory, which extended along the coast as far as the Rhine, was as low as Jutland and "shagged everywhere with forests." On the whole, it was a gloomy, foggy land; a land of fens, wide moors—the haunt of water-fowl—dense woods full of wild boars, stags, and wolves; a land dominated by the sea, whose winter roar penetrated every part, whose salt spray drifted over all things; a land bathed for a few months in almost incessant rain and mist, and swept for the rest of the year by icy blasts.

The Germania of Tacitus. The earliest picture that we have of the inhabitants of these lowlands of Europe is

that furnished by Tacitus, who wrote his *Germania*, A.D. 98. The Germans, as he called all the tribes north of Gaul, were " a race pure, unmixed, and stamped with a distinct character. Hence a family likeness pervades the whole, though their numbers are so great: eyes stern and blue; ruddy hair; large bodies powerful in sudden exertions, but impatient of toil and labor." Their land abounded in flocks and herds, which were their only wealth. In battle they were fierce and determined, rushing to the onslaught with terrible cries and hoarse songs. " It is reproach and infamy during a whole succeeding life to retreat from the field, leaving their chief. To aid, to protect him, to place their own gallant actions to the account of his glory, is their first and most sacred engagement." " They suppose somewhat of sanctity and prescience to be inherent in the female sex"; " the matrimonial bond is strict and severe"; " they live fenced about with chastity." As to their daily habits of life, Tacitus observes that " as soon as they arise from sleep, which they generally protract till late in the day, they bathe, . . . take their meal, each on a distinct seat, and at a separate table. Then they proceed armed to business, and not less frequently to convivial parties, in which it is no disgrace to pass days and nights, without intermission, in drinking. The frequent quarrels that arise amongst them, when intoxicated, seldom terminate in abusive language but more frequently in blood."

SUGGESTED READING. Tacitus, *Germania*, Oxford Edition.

Beowulf. (**Ten Brink**, i., 23; **Morley**, i., 6; **Brooke**, *Early English Literature*, 12–74). But we do not have

to depend alone on the testimony of Roman historians who at best could have had only a superficial knowledge of the subject. This early Englishman has given us a picture of himself which stands complete. To gain anything like a clear conception of these dwellers in the German forests we must go to *Beowulf*, doubtless the oldest poem in the English language, and indeed in any modern European tongue. Scholars differ as to its date, but it is generally supposed to have been composed before the English conquest and passed on by tradition during several centuries till it was finally put into writing in some of the early monasteries, perhaps in Northumbria. Mutilated as it has been by time and by Christian copyists, who freely inserted pious antidotes for its heathenism, it nevertheless breathes the very soul of those fierce seamen who in the fifth and sixth centuries laid the foundations of the English nation. Here we have the Teuton untouched by extraneous influences; here we have the child not afraid to be himself, not concealed by artificial forms and requirements; here we have the Englishman stripped of fifteen centuries of culture. To get at the heart of things we must turn to this old saga.

He who reads *Beowulf* through at a sitting goes away with a maze of impressions. It is a song of blood, of battle, of wassailing, of the sea. The clang of battle-sarks; the flash of war-bills; black ships darting over the foaming currents; warriors boasting and bragging; horses racing at furious speed; fen-moors, windy nesses; blood in torrents,—the waters boiling with it; the roll and welter of waves; nickers and fen-stalkers; hoarse shouts of drunken warriors at the mead-benches; scops and gleemen "yelling out the joys of fight"—a confusion of

graphic pictures following each other fast, a wild landscape seen by lightning flashes on a black night.

The landscape in *Beowulf* is vague and vast. There are no tilled fields,—all is wild, weird, stirring. It is a land of " mist-covered fen-moors," " sea-cliffs gleaming, precipitous mountains, nesses enormous," " blustering bluffs." The inland regions are unknown and terrible; how can mere words hold more of uncanny suggestion than those giving the description of the haunts of Grendel?

> They guard the wolf-coverts,
> Lands inaccessible, wind-beaten nesses,
> Fearfulest fen-deeps, where a flood from the mountains
> 'Neath mists of the nesses netherward rattles,
> The stream under earth : not far is it henceward
> Measured by mile-lengths that the mere-water standeth,
> Which forests hang over, with frost-whiting covered,
> A firm-rooted forest, the floods overshadow.
> There ever at night one an ill-meaning portent
> A fire-flood may see ; 'mong children of men
> None liveth so wise as wot of the bottom ;
> Though harassed by hounds the heath-stepper seek for,
> Fly to the forest, firm-antlered he-deer,
> Spurred from afar, his spirit he yieldeth,
> His life on the shore, ere he will venture
> To cover his head. Uncanny the place is :
> Thence upward ascendeth the surging of waters,
> Wan to the welkin, when the wind is stirring
> The weathers unpleasing till the air groweth gloomy,
> And the heavens lower.[1]

Before this vague land lay the sea, a welter of waters, cold, dark, storm-troubled. Everywhere in the poem are " wave-deeps tossing, fighting the fierce wind " ; ice-bonds that close the currents; the return of spring, and

[1] Dr. Hall's translation.

the sea-rovers, winter-weary, eager for new wandering; "the waves twisting the sea on the sands"; fleet ships, —"ocean-wood,"—"foamy-necked, fanned by the breezes," gliding like sea-birds over the "fallow flood"; the dead sea-king in his best ship set adrift, given "to the god of storms."

In this environment, against this background, move a wild people, teeming with animal life,—Titanic, somber. They have no nerves, no pity, no fancy. They are serious and earnest. Their appetites are enormous; they eat to repletion, drink to drunkenness, and then sleep heavily upon the mead-benches. Hoarse shouts of revelry echo from every page. Their dream of earthly happiness is to be surrounded by heroes, to bathe in a surfeit of slaughter, and after the battle to divide the booty, to lavish gifts upon each other, to sit in the mead-hall drinking and boasting while "bench glee" and carousing run wild. The crowning desire of King Hrothgar's life was

> To urge his folk to found a great building,
> A mead-hall grander than men of the era
> Ever had heard of, and in it to share
> With young and old all of the blessings
> The Lord had allowed him save life and retainers.[1]

Blood and slaughter run through the poem like a scarlet thread: "seething soul gore," "sword-drink," "hottest of war-sweats"—over and over the idea is repeated. Almost every trait of character mentioned by Tacitus is here portrayed, often in pictures as realistic as photographs: the liegeman who will die before he will desert his lord; the honor everywhere paid to women, who are admitted to the mead-halls, and who even make speeches to the

[1] Dr. Hall's translation.

warriors; the quarrels that arise among intoxicated revelers. As in Tacitus, we have the record of a whole day with all its occupations from morn till midnight.

The view of life taken by these men was cheerless and stoical. A level gloom is the atmosphere of the poem. It begins and ends with a funeral; there is in it not a laughing voice, nor a singing bird, nor a word of pity or of hope. A keen sense of the brevity of life hung heavily over these primitive men. Death was the great horror not because they shrank from its physical terrors, nor because it snatched its victim to scenes he knew not of, but because it was the time for "the leaving of life-joys." Man was in the hands of the weirds, and why should he struggle? Fate would take him when his days were numbered, and not before. The plaint of the aged Hrothgar is typical:

> Beware of arrogance, world-famous champion!
> But a little while lasts thy life-vigor's fullness;
> 'T will after hap early, that illness or sword-edge
> Shall part thee from strength, or the grasp of the fire,
> Or the wave of the current, or clutch of the edges,
> Or flight of the war-spear, or age with its horrors,
> Or thine eyes' bright flashing shall fade into darkness:
> 'T will happen full early, excellent hero,
> That death shall subdue thee.[1]

But there is a primitive sweetness, a simplicity of view, a true pathos, an honesty about the poem that is most delightful. These old Teutons, with all their fierceness, appetite, and gloom, were true men, as wholesome as nature herself. Compared with the civilized nations to the south, they were purity personified. They were full of a vigorous animal health, uncorrupted, unweakened;

[1] Dr. Hall's translation.

they were virtuous, sincere, and deeply religious. Their creed, reduced to its lowest terms, was to vanquish and destroy, yet it had its roots in the sincere conviction that the non-warlike man was an inferior, a degenerate. Contempt for civilization became a religious sentiment, and crushed out all pity; but all this feeling was honest and sincere, and when turned into right channels it could but result in sterling character.

REQUIRED READING. *Beowulf*, Dr. Hall's translation, in connection with the *Germania* and Emerson's *English Traits*, which is a study of the modern Englishman made from an impartial standpoint by a master.

CHAPTER IV

ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN

The Dark Period, 449–597. (**York Powell,** *Early England;* **Allen,** *Anglo-Saxon Britain;* **Morley,** vols. i. and ii.) The year 449 is to England what 1607 is to America,—it marks the close of the century of incursions for plunder and the opening of the new period of settlement. The century and a half following this date was in every respect a time of darkness: it was Christianity in a death struggle with heathenism; it was an era unrecorded. The Roman historians were silent; the invaders almost to a man could neither read nor write, and the Celtic monks, who alone could have preserved the record, chose not to chronicle the shame of their race. Only one contemporary document is left us, the doleful lamentations of the monk Gildas, "the British Jeremiah," which contain here and there snatches of what is undoubtedly genuine history.

On the whole we can judge of the conquest only by studying its results. It was not a movement that happened all at once; it was not a tidal wave that swept rapidly over the island; it was the slow work of a century and a half. The ranks of the invaders were comparatively small and their landings were scattered both as to time and territory. Each settlement was in a way independent of the others; there was no

457. Hengist Founds Kent.
490. Ella Founds South Saxony.
519. Cerdic Founds Wessex.
520 (?). Death of King Arthur.
547. Ida Founds Kingdom of Bernicia.
545–560. Gildas' History.

concert, no unity of forces. It was like the settlement of America by scattered colonies working each for its own end. There were, in time, at least seven of these colonies along the eastern and southern shores, and these, as in colonial America, fell roughly into three groups: the northern colonies, the middle, and the southern. A common grievance drew the Americans early into a union, but union came to the English kingdoms only after centuries of strife.

571. Uffa Founds East Anglia.

586. Cridda Founds Mercia.

The wars with the Welsh were fierce and cruel. Like the Indians of America in later years, they were driven gradually backward until they were forced to make their last stand in the mountains of the extreme west. Vast numbers of them were slain. The women and the humblest of the peasantry escaped the general slaughter; they were retained as wives and slaves—but the fighting men were almost completely exterminated. So mercilessly were they crushed that they lost their language and even their identity: only about thirty words of early Celtic origin have survived in our language, and these are almost wholly connected with the lowest forms of manual toil. But the Celtic element, though it can never be estimated accurately, must constantly be reckoned with. In Kent it is small; in Wales it is very large; in no part of England is it wholly wanting.

The Struggle for Unity, 597–828. (**Lappenburg,** *Anglo-Saxon Kings.*) The history of the next two centuries need not detain us. The long drama of the conquest was practically over; the English for the first time were dominant in England; but the land lay in a chaos

617–633. Eadwine. Northumbria at its Height.

664. Council at Whitby.

668–690. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury.
680. Cædmon.
685. Beginning of Northumbrian Decline.
735. Death of Bæda.
758–796. Offa. Mercia at its Height.
787. Danes First Visit England.
828. Union of all England under Ecgberht of Wessex.

of petty kingdoms, each with an independent ruler. A clash was inevitable. Who should be the greatest,—the Bretwalder, the wielder of Britain? The question was soon answered in part: it must be the king of Northumbria, of Mercia, or of Wessex. The lead was at once taken by Northumbria, and under Eadwine there began the first brilliant era in Anglo-Saxon history. Patriotism, bounded it is true by province lines, ran high; laws, education, literature, arts, began to flourish. In less than a century Northumbria had become the intellectual leader not only of England but of Europe as well. But the political power of the north was soon crushed by Mercia, and Mercia in turn succumbed to Wessex.

481–511. Clovis, Founder of the French Monarchy.
632. Death of Mahomet.
732. The Moors Defeated by Martel.
752. Pepin, King of the Franks.
800. Charlemagne.

As we read of the struggles between these great powers, we seem to see a chaos of fierce armies, and, one after another, the figures of colossal men pushed up for a moment above the mass of shouting warriors only to be pulled down and replaced by other figures on the shoulders of other armies. It was the era of the kings. The overlordship followed no laws as to succession. It depended wholly on the personal ability of the king who laid claim to it. Under such conditions the island became a battle-ground, a school for kings, for great leaders of men.

At the close of the era the unity of England was almost as far away as when it commenced. Even when Wessex had gathered all the kingdoms into a loose confederacy

that owned Ecgberht as supreme lord, there was no real union. Each province maintained its own tribal organization and obeyed its own king. An intense sectionalism had been caused by the struggle for the overlordship; patriotism was bounded by province lines; to them union meant simply conquest and added territory for the glory of their own little kingdom. The two centuries of warfare had accustomed the English mind to the thought of a single master of Britain, but they had done little more.

The Christian Conquest, 597–686. (**Bright,** *Early English Church History;* **Azarius,** *Development of Old English Thought;* **Milman,** *Latin Christianity,* Bk. iv., ch. 4, Bk. v., ch. 10.) While this noisy combat of king with king was in full career, a silent force, one that was destined to revolutionize the English mind, was at work among the kingdoms. In the year 597, at the very opening of the era of the kings, there arrived at the old landing-place in Kent, that gateway through which has come nearly everything destined to work deep changes in Britain, a little band of Roman monks sent by Pope Gregory to Christianize the island. Never was there an undertaking that seemed more visionary and hopeless. As viewed from Rome, Britain seemed to lie at the world's end, and its inhabitants were believed to be utterly lawless and savage,—the wildest people in Europe. Before the exodus to Britain they had never come into contact with Rome, and during a century and a half in the island they had received almost nothing from southern civilization. Their wars were waged for extermination, and when the Welsh had been torn to pieces the wolves had fallen with fury upon one another. Thus it looked from Rome, but the earliest messengers from Augustine to the

Pope conveyed the great news that the king of Kent and ten thousand of his subjects had at once received baptism. Gradually but surely the new religion worked northward and westward, until within less than a century every corner of Britain had been brought within the pale of the Roman Church.

The causes of the prompt acceptance of Christianity by these barbaric tribes are easily found. They were children of nature, almost untouched by civilization,—credulous, susceptible. The magnificent organization of the Roman Church, its solemn sacraments, its symbolism, its pomp and show, impressed them greatly. The Roman monks appealed constantly to their credulity: Bæda's history of the early English Church is almost a book of miracles. It was soon found that it was no hard thing to accept the new faith; it required no rooting-up of age-old beliefs and the substitution of new and startling ideas. The Teutonic tribes had always been serious and reflective: they had believed in a future life, and in the presiding influences of good and evil. They had ever been honest, and chaste, and loyal to friends and kin. To accept Christianity was but to change the names of their gods and their forms of worship. Christ was to them but another name for the gentle and gracious Balder; Woden was found to be after all only the earliest ancestor of their kings; and the Virgin corresponded perfectly with their ideal of true womanhood. Their great nature festivals of Yuletide and Eostratide could be easily changed into celebrations of the birth and the resurrection of Christ. But the sincerity and the purity of the early Roman missionaries were, perhaps, after all, the leading factors in the christianizing of the island. More self-

sacrificing and courageous men never bore the gospel into heathendom. The breadth and greatness, the grandeur and high solemnity of their message, together with the purity, enthusiasm, self-sacrifice, and consistency of their own lives, would have accomplished its end among any people.

This noiseless revolution, in the greatness of its results, is second to no other in English history. It was the first leaven from Roman Europe that had come into the lump of Teutonic barbarism, and, wherever it touched, it humanized and civilized. Wars went on as before, but their character was changed. There was no more extermination, no more battle for mere booty. From being out of contact with all the external world, the English now came into touch with Rome, the spiritual and intellectual center of civilization. The Roman monks and priests brought in books, and art, and culture. Monasteries began to arise,—influential centers where students gathered, where learning and art were cultivated, where perpetual peace reigned. Seldom has any one influence so transformed a people. In two centuries Britain was changed from a bloody battlefield on which shouted wild, unlettered savages, into the intellectual center of Europe, the leader of the world's best thought and civilization.

The influence of Christianity in cementing the English kingdoms into a unity must not be overlooked. The Council of Whitby, which determined that the Roman and not the Celtic type of Christianity was to prevail, was the first important step. Under Theodore all England was welded into one spiritual kingdom. The head of the Church was at Canterbury. Here the ecclesiasti-

cal synods drew the kingdoms into a parliament where canons were enacted to affect England as a whole. It was, therefore, no long step from the thought of the single spiritual throne at Canterbury to that of a single temporal throne and a united England.

The Supremacy of Wessex, 828–1013. "The wars of the kites and crows," as Milton termed the two centuries of conflict for the overlordship, were brought suddenly to an end by a most unlooked-for and overwhelming disaster. The Teutonic tribes on the Baltic, in Jutland and Scandinavia, the old home of the English, after three centuries of obscurity, again turned their keels westward, and the old drama of the conquest was repeated in almost every detail. Again an era of sudden incursions, of ruthless slaughter, of wholesale pillage; again an era of conquest and settlement; and again, still later, an era of political subjugation. To realize what the three centuries on British soil had done for the Anglo-Saxon tribes, one has but to compare them with these fierce sea-wolves of the ninth and tenth centuries, who were in blood, in speech, in views of life, in religion, customs, and temperament but a repetition of the hordes that had poured into England under Hengist and Ida. "The first sight of the Northmen," says Green, "is as if the hand on the dial of history had gone back three hundred years." Northumbria was ravaged with fire and sword until almost every vestige of culture was blotted out, and then, like a swarm of locusts, the invaders turned southward. The flimsy nature of the union between the kingdoms became at once apparent. From first to last there was no united resistance. Each invaded section fought for life unaided by neighbors, just as the Welsh had done in earlier years.

A united kingdom, in the sense that we now use the term, was undreamed of.

Slowly the black shadow of barbarism crept over the English map; but in the meantime a new force was arising in England. The close of the era of the kings had seen Wessex in the lead. Under Ecgberht there had been for the first time a union of all English kingdoms. This powerful organizer had learned kingcraft in the court of the great Charlemagne; he was in full sympathy with the new political ideas across the Channel, and he was able to organize his domain, in accordance with these ideas, to such a degree that he could at last do the unprecedented thing of handing down the overlordship to his successors. Under him, despite the omnipresent Dane that hung like a millstone upon the island, there began a new era for England.

867. Danes Conquer Northumbria.
871–901. Ælfred.
874. Danes Conquer Mercia.
878. Danes Invade Wessex; Defeated by Ælfred.
912. Northmen Settle Normandy.
959. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury.
980. Death of Dunstan. Wessex at its Height.
994. Invasion of Danes under Swein.
1013. All England Submits to Swein.
1016–1042. Danish Kings.
1042–1066. Last English Kings.

Under Ælfred, a grandson of Ecgberht, Wessex took another step forward. The Danes were checked in their victorious career, and a line was drawn beyond which they might not go. The little kingdom became the head of England in every sense: it was the only section unconquered by the Danes, the only section where learning and literature and law still existed. The hearts of its people began to throb with pride and patriotism. For nearly a century after Ælfred's time the Danish movement upon the island ceased, and little by little the kingdom of Wessex wrested the north from the invaders. In time something like a national spirit began to awaken

among all the English tribes. The tenth century witnessed the glory of Wessex, as the seventh had witnessed that of Northumbria. The two brief eras stand out in bright relief when we look down the dreary perspective of Anglo-Saxon history.

The Danish Supremacy, 1013–1066. But like Northumbria two centuries before, Wessex fell at length into weak hands. Ælfred and his immediate successors had kept the Dane within bounds by vigorous action; the later kings secured immunity from attack by the payment of heavy tribute, and it became only a matter of time when the inevitable result would follow. An act of treachery precipitated the calamity. In 1013 the Northman was supreme in England; Cnut, the leader, became king, and the Danish dream of a great Scandinavian empire, embracing all the lands about the North Sea, bade fair to be realized. Until 1066, when William, himself a Northman, took possession of England, the Dane was the leading factor in English politics.

The short period of Danish supremacy need not be discussed at length, yet it cannot be overlooked by the student seeking the elements that have made the English people. It was simply throwing into the crucible new masses of crude ore, of fresh raw material. It greatly retarded the process of evolution—it was a positive setback, even; but it introduced no new element, and it did not change the character of the final product. The Angles and Saxons had found the Welsh utterly different from themselves, and they had mingled with them to no appreciable degree; but the Danes found in the English a people differing from themselves only in degree of civilization, and barbarism soon yielded to the stronger

force of enlightenment. Gradually they learned the language, not much different from their own; they accepted Christianity as readily as had the Anglo-Saxons; they took English wives; they mingled freely with the conquered people, and in time their national identity was swallowed up completely.

The Formative Era. Between Hengist and William the Conqueror lies a period of six centuries,—a period five times as long as our own national history. Its importance need not be dwelt upon. It was the formative era in English history. At its opening we see barbaric hordes, at its close we have what is essentially the Englishman of to-day. Other elements were to be added, but they were to work no fundamental changes. The English had evolved themselves; seldom has there been a people that has arisen from barbarism to enlightenment with so little help from outside hands. One important element, that of Christianity, had come from abroad, but nevertheless it is safe to say with Duruy that "from the time when the Roman power had been broken until the moment when William the Conqueror brought the British Isles again under continental dominion, England's relations with the rest of Europe were slight." It was this that gave the Englishman his peculiar personality, his views of life, his estimate of values, so different from those of other Europeans.

CHAPTER V

ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

I. The Primal Poetry

The Scop. (**Brooke**, *History of Early English Literature;* **Morley**, *English Writers*, vol. ii.; **Azarius**, *Development of Old English Thought;* **Earle**, *Anglo-Saxon Literature.*) To a greater extent than that of almost any other nation, save perhaps Greece, the literature of England has been an evolution. In everything that pertained to mental culture the Englishman began at the lowest elements, and in a corner of the world, almost out of contact with all others, educated himself. The story of his earliest lispings will never be known. When, through the aid of Tacitus, we first catch sight of him, he has already made an advance,—he goes into battle singing rude songs of heroism and boasting. Still later, in *Beowulf*, we see him again in his bardic age. First of all a warrior, his loftiest ideals are connected with physical bravery, with power, with glory. Kings and heroes love to hear chanted the praises of their own prowess and the glory of their ancestry. A class of professional singers has arisen,—scops, or gleemen,—who wander, like the rhapsodists of Homeric days, from court to court, chanting from memory or improvising at will wild songs of "battle and bale," accompanying themselves upon the "glee-beam," and stirring their hearers as with trumpets. On the joyous morning after Beowulf had cleared Heorot of Grendel, the gleeman of the hall,

a thane of the folk-lord,
Who ancient traditions treasured in memory,
New word-groups found properly bound :
The bard after 'gan then Beowulf's venture
Wisely to tell of, and words that were clever
To utter skilfully, earnestly speaking.[1]

This gleeman was a singer stationed permanently in the court of the king. In *The Lament of Deor* we have the complaint of such a gleeman after he has been supplanted in the king's favor by another singer more skilful or more popular. But more frequently the scop was a wanderer like Widsith who

Far traveled through strange lands and learnt
Of good and evil in the spacious world,
Parted from home friends and dear kindred.[2]

Such a wanderer was eagerly welcomed wherever he went. He brought news, gossip, entertainment. He was poet, novelist, singer, actor, newspaper, all in one. Through a long era the scop ruled supreme in every realm of literature.

The poetry of this prehistoric epoch was not written. It was transmitted orally from generation to generation as were the earliest murmurings of Greek song. The few mutilated leaves that have survived the blasts of more than a thousand winters represent but a pitiful fragment of that minstrelsy that made joyous those long hypoborean evenings,—the twilight of history. Moreover, the little that survives is far from its original form. The songs, since they were not written, changed constantly. All the specimens now extant are in Anglo-Saxon, a lan-

[1] Dr. Hall's translation. [2] Morley's translation.

guage formed after the migration to Britain, a fact which proves that the gleemen, as the language changed, were forced gradually to recast the old ballads in order to be understood. In later days all the heathen poetry was at the mercy of the Church. In her hands alone was the art preservative. The scops and gleemen became monks, and the few ancient ballads which they saw fit to copy they mutilated and amended at will.

These fragments of primal poetry which have come without name or date out of the mists of the past may be counted almost on one's fingers. Aside from the single manuscript of *Beowulf* and *Judith*, now in the British Museum; the Junian Manuscript of Cædmon, now in the Bodleian; the mutilated leaf of parchment rescued from an old bookbinding, telling of a fight around the burning castle of Finn, doubtless all that remains of a noble epic; and two leaves of the poem *Waldhere*, accidentally discovered at Copenhagen—they are all to be found in a single manuscript collection that by great good fortune has remained undisturbed in Exeter Cathedral for nearly nine centuries. This collection includes *Widsith*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Lament of Deor*, *The Fates of Men*, *The Ruined City*.

[For a full bibliography of the Anglo-Saxon literature up to the time of Ælfred, see Brooke, p. xiv.; also Earle, ch. ii. Excellent translations from most of these poems may be found in Brooke and Morley.]

The Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon Poetry. While early English poetry knew nothing of rhyme or meter it nevertheless followed laws that were definite and difficult. Each verse must have four accents and must consist of two parts with three alliterating words, two of them in the first half.

Oft Scyld Scefing sceathena þreatum,
Monegum maegþum meodo-setla ofteah.

The effect of this arrangement is to give a curious, jerky movement. One gets from it the idea of rude, nervous strength. It is poetry for the dealers of sword-strokes, for the rowers of war-galleys. The very monotony of the time-beat is exhilarating. One can almost hear the excited cadences of the old gleeman; the steady, blood-stirring roll of his harp-notes; and see the rhythmic sway of his head and his body as one reads such lines as those describing the attack on the castle of Finn:

Then wildly cried he, the warrior king,
This is no dawn of East, no flight of dragon;
Nor burn the cressets, bright in the broad hall,
Fierce is the flaming. Frightened the birds sing,
Wild chirps the cricket, but wilder the war wood,
Shield and shaft meeting. See the moon shining,
In clouds she wanders, waking the woful deeds,
Hates of the people. Rouse ye my heroes!
Fight for your dear land, fight in the forefront.

. . . . . .

Then in the hall rose roar of the slaughter,
Round mighty Guthlafsson lay many corpses.
Sailed then the raven, swart and brown-sallow;
In the fierce sword-gleam seemed it Finn's castle
Blazed altogether. Battle I never heard,
Nobler of heroes fitter for mead feast.[1]

But usually this old poetry moves slowly. Repetitions and parallel constructions are frequent. The singer often hovers over his ideas, repeats his nouns in figurative synonyms, and dwells fondly on the added epithets thus made possible. Picturesque compounds and metaphors

[1] Washburn's translation.

are everywhere abundant. The ocean is the "whale's path"; blood is "sword-drink"; the stag is the "heath-stepper"; and hail is "the coldest of corn." When Beowulf rains sword-blows upon the mother of Grendel his "war-blade sings a greedy battle-song."

The great beauty of this early minstrelsy lies in its originality and freshness. It was the epic era of English song, and its pictures are drawn in the vague tints that are characteristic of childhood. Much of it is dreary and unpoetic, but through it are scattered rare gems: battle scenes, realistic and stirring; graphic pictures of the sea; swift glimpses into home and hall, and, what is better, into heart and soul. Here and there are passages that soar into the pure ether of world-poetry; single lines that are whole poems in miniature. What a line is that in *The Seafarer*:

> He lives ever longing who looks to the sea.

Feeble work does not survive the storms of a thousand years.

REQUIRED READING. *The Seafarer*, tr. Morley, ii.; *The Wanderer*, tr. Morley, ii.; *The Ruined City*, Brooke.

II. THE NORTHUMBRIAN SCHOOL (680–782)

The introduction of Christianity, with its insistence upon the use of Latin as the literary tongue, well-nigh destroyed in the bud all native song. Ecclesiastical writings in abundance sprang up everywhere in the track of the Roman missionaries, but they were English neither in form nor spirit. The old songs that had come from the heart and the life of the people were regarded by the Church as heathen and impious, and gradually they dis-

appeared. Only in Northumbria did the old literary spirit survive. Here the scop, when he became monk, remembered the old minstrelsy; he preserved with care the primal poetry that he loved, easing his new Christian conscience with pious editing. He created new songs from Biblical lore. Hell now took the place of Grendel's den; devils roamed the dark places instead of nickers and fen-stalkers; his minstrel harp now glorified not the deeds of world-heroes, but the wars of the Lord. It was in Northumbria that English literature really began, and its opening notes were strong and varied. Beginning with Cædmon and ending with Cynewulf there was a well-rounded literary era which passed through every stage of development; which rose, flourished, and decayed, and which in its short life of a century showed a wonderful activity and fruitfulness.

This sudden outburst of literature and culture in the rude north, among a people who a century before had been merely an invading horde of barbarians, seems at first thought paradoxical. A study of the era, however, reveals well defined causes,—the same, indeed, in the main, that have made every distinct literary period.

Northumbria was the last important province of England to fall into Teutonic hands. Bæda records that it was settled by Angles who came with their families in a regular exodus, leaving the motherland well-nigh deserted. From the very first they showed a marvelous activity. They swept away the native Britons, pushed their frontiers to the Humber, the Frith of Forth, and the Irish Sea, and then under Æthelfrith, scarce fifty years from their first settlement, they made themselves masters of all the southern kingdoms save Kent. The

seventh century in England was the era of Northumbria. Under Eadwine and the three strong kings that followed him, the glory of the north, though at times temporarily dimmed, illumined all of Britain, and even shed its rays across the Channel. As a result of this temporal prosperity, this period of national expansion, of pride and confidence in fatherland, there came an enlargement of ideas and a new intellectual activity. Nor did the movement cease when Northumbria lost her political leadership, for the years of peace and material prosperity that follow this loss mark the time of her greatest intellectual glory.

It was at this fortunate moment, this period of rapid transition, that Christianity entered the north. From the first the Angles had done nothing by halves, and now, having accepted the new religion, they followed it with zeal and vigor. There arose a wonderful band of spiritual leaders,—afterwards to be revered as saints. The freshness and power of the Church was like that of apostolic times. Monasteries arose on every hand. Enthusiastic workers like Aldhelm and Biscop and Wilfrid visited Rome again and again to bring books, pictures, and vestments, skilled workers, artisans, and chanters. Eager Northumbrian learners went to Canterbury to sit at the feet of Theodore and the learned Hadrian. Gradually there grew up in the north a remarkable band of scholars, until, in the eighth century, the best learning of Europe was to be found in the Northumbrian monasteries. When Charlemagne, the central figure of the Middle Ages, looked over Europe for a scholar worthy to instruct his sons and his people, he chose Alcuin of York.

The Church being thus powerful in the north, why did it not cast a blight on all literary products in the native tongue, as it had done elsewhere in England? The reasons can only be conjectured. The Church of Northumbria had been founded by the Irish; the Celtic ritual was in the vernacular, and it was a whole generation before it was supplanted by the Roman form. The clergy therefore were less prejudiced against the native tongue. They taught the people freely in the only language they could understand. Even Bæda, that quintessence of monasticism, spent his last hours turning the Gospel into English for the use of the people, and the learned monks of Whitby translated with pious care that an illiterate peasant might turn the Scriptures into native verse. Then, too, the Angles had come to England without breaking their home life, and old songs and traditions linger longest about the fireside. They had remained in the old home on the North Sea a century longer than had the men of Kent. They were nearer to their childhood and the epic era. The old minstrel harp, ringing with heathen songs of heroes and booty, enlivened the long evenings, and it was permitted even under the shadow of the monastery. The old songs still had their primal vigor and freshness. They were still a part of the individual and the national life. The Church could change the theme, but it was powerless to change the spirit and the form. Then, too, the new school of poetry in Northumbria was spontaneous even as it was in later Elizabethan times, and when the song bursts from the heart the singer must voice it in his own tongue. And who can tell that it was not Cædmon, the unlettered herdsman,—who sang because he must, and, like Shake-

speare and Burns of later years, used his native tongue because he knew no other,—who gave the primal impulse to Northumbrian song? "Others after him," writes Bæda, "attempted in the English nation to compose religious poems, but none could ever compare with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, but from God."

1. Cædmon (d. 680?)

"The Anglo-Saxon Milton."

Life. (**Bæda,** *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. iv., Ch. xxiv.) The early English minstrelsy is anonymous. Amid all the wreckage of the settlement era we find not the name of a single poet until in a chapter of Bæda we find, inserted half by accident, an account of the poet Cædmon (pr. Kadmon). Other singers of greater power there may have been in Bæda's day; it is not impossible that even the glorious old shaper of *Beowulf* or of *The Fight at Finnesbruh* was known to him, but he mentioned only this one singer since the motive of his work was wholly religious, and since he lost no opportunity for recording events that he believed to be miraculous. Of Cædmon we know nothing save what is contained in this single chapter. Of his poetry we cannot say with certainty that we have a single line.

Having lived [says Bæda] in a secular habit till he was well advanced in years, he had never learned anything of versifying; for which reason, being sometimes at entertainments, when it was agreed for the sake of mirth that all present should sing in their turns, when he saw the instrument coming towards him, he rose up from table and returned home. Having done so at a certain time and gone out of the house where the entertainment was to the stable, where he had to take care of the horses that night, he there composed himself to rest at the proper time; a person appeared to him in

his sleep and saluting him by his name said, "Cædmon, sing some song to me." He answered, "I cannot sing; for that was the reason why I left the entertainment, and retired to this place, because I could not sing." The other who talked to him replied, "However, you shall sing." "What shall I sing?" rejoined he. "Sing the beginning of created things," said the other. Hereupon he presently began to sing verses to the praise of God, which he had never heard, the purport whereof was thus:

"We are now to praise the Maker of the Heavenly Kingdom, the power of the Creator and His counsel, the deeds of the Father of Glory. How He, being the Eternal God, became the author of all miracles, who first, as almighty preserver of the human race, created Heaven for the sons of men as the roof of the house, and next the earth."

This is the sense and not the words in order as he sung them in his sleep; for verses, though never so well composed, cannot be literally translated out of one language into another without losing much of their beauty and loftiness. Awaking from his sleep, he remembered all that he had sung in his dream, and soon added much more to the same effect in verse worthy of the Deity.

Believing this to be a veritable miracle, the heads of the monastery at once admitted Cædmon as a monk, and here he passed the rest of his life. Portions of Scripture were translated to him daily, and he,

keeping in mind all he heard, and, as it were, chewing the cud, converted the same into most harmonious verse; and sweetly repeating the same, made his masters in their turn his hearers. He sang the creation of the world, the origin of man, and all the history of Genesis; and made many verses on the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and their entering into the land of promise, with many other histories from holy writ; the incarnation, passion, resurrection of our Lord, and His ascension into Heaven; the coming of the Holy Ghost and the preaching of the Apostles; also the terror of future judgment, the horror of the pains of Hell, and the delights of Heaven; besides many more about the divine benefits and judgments.

Here, then, is the border-land between the old and the new. Cædmon's childhood was over before the conversion of Northumbria. By instinct and early training he was as heathen as were his wild ancestors whose ships

had spread terror along the Saxon shore. Christianity had come to him in early manhood; it had changed the names of his gods and had added to his stores of religious lore. We may be sure that had we the veritable words which Cædmon sang from *Genesis* and *Exodus* that stirred those English monks of Whitby, we should find them Hebraic and Christian only in externals. In conception, in spirit, in scene, they would be as Teutonic as *Beowulf*, and almost as heathen.

The Cædmon Cycle. (**Brooke,** Chs. xv.–xx.; **Azarius,** *Development of Old English Thought.*) In the year 1650 or thereabout there came into the hands of the Dutch scholar Junius an old Anglo-Saxon manuscript in two parts, the first containing paraphrases from the Old Testament and the second a short collection of New Testament paraphrases, which have been grouped under the title *Christ and Satan.* The opening lines of *Genesis* suggested Bæda's Latin paraphrase of Cædmon's first song, and the contents of the manuscript corresponded so fully with Bæda's description of the poet's work that the collection was at once attributed to Cædmon. Modern criticism, however, has made sad work with this estimate. It now seems certain that the collection embraces the work of several singers, and it may even be doubted if Cædmon wrote any part of the book. Portions of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, however, are certainly worthy of this inspired singer, and in the absence of positive knowledge it will do no harm to consider all of the poems under his name.

The Junian Manuscript.

BOOK I.

Genesis (2935 lines).
Exodus (589 lines).
Daniel (765 lines).

BOOK II.

Christ and Satan (733 lines):
Fall of the Angels.
Harrowing of Hell.
The Resurrection.
The Ascension.
Pentecost.
The Last Judgment.
The Temptation.

That they were done by members of the Northumbrian school within a century following the death of Cædmon seems reasonably certain.

The literary merit of this song cycle varies greatly. When the paraphrase follows closely the Scripture narrative or when it becomes homiletic, it is usually dull and lifeless. The *Daniel* and the *Christ and Satan* may be dismissed without comment. But there are thrilling passages in *Exodus*, and parts of *Genesis* mark the highest sweep of Anglo-Saxon song. The poet leaves at times the Scripture narrative, and is never so delightful as when he has wandered farthest and has given his imagination free rein. At every point where there is action he enters with heart and soul into the scene. It lives again; it seems almost reënacting before his eyes. The episode of the flood, the battles of Abraham, the destruction of the cities of the plain, are told with all the enthusiasm of an eye-witness. There is a mental picture before the singer, clean-cut, vivid, and its background is ever some familiar scene of his native Northland. The offering of Isaac takes place on a high dune overlooking the lowlands. The preparations for the burning are thoroughly Teutonic; it reminds one of the closing scene of *Beowulf*. All battle songs have the old heathen ring; blood flows in rivers; even when the sea swallows the Egyptians blood is everywhere. It is not the monk but the heathen scop who sings the approach of Pharaoh's host:

> A spear-wood was moving, the war-line gleamed,
> Flags wildly flapped, folk the march treading;
> Fierce clattered trappings, war was approaching,
> Blickered the broadswords, blared the brass trumpets.
> War-fowls were wheeling, wailing above them,
> Greedy for carnage; ravens were croaking,

Dewy-winged spoilers over slain bodies,
Swart battle-seekers. Wolves were singing
Horrible even-song, hopeful of having.

The blood leaps in the veins of the singer as he tells of the final catastrophe. The fierce harp-roll of the Finnesbruh fragment resounds from the verse. The singer is tense with excitement. Like one who has just emerged from a great battle he can think and talk of nothing else. He repeats himself again and again; he uses every epithet, every image of battle and carnage known to the Teutonic mind:

The folk was affrighted, flood-terror seized on
Souls deeply saddened; sea threatened death then,
Red were the burg-slopes, blood did bedew them;
Gore gushed from ocean, corpse rode the billow,
Water was weapon-full, wail-mist started.
Back the Egyptians turned wildly rushing,
Tore mad with terror, torment pursued them;
Home now they longed for, battle-sick heroes,
Boast became weeping; began then with fury
Boiling of billows; of all that war-band
None saw his dear home, for fast behind them
Weird locked the wave-doors. Where erst the way was
Mere galloped madly, the host was o'erwhelmed,—

and so through eighty quivering lines. Such songs would have pleased heathen revelers on the mead-benches who had just listened to the thrilling roll of *Beowulf*.

But the glory of the Junian Manuscript is the story of the revolt of Satan and the fall of man in *Genesis*. It is *Paradise Lost* nine centuries before Milton. As we know surely of no earlier work from which Cædmon could have gained his materials, it is pleasing to fancy that this poet, divinely inspired, created with sublime imagination the story that was afterwards to appear as the greatest of

English epics. For Milton was deeply interested in things Anglo-Saxon,—he had written a history of the period; he was doubtless a friend of Junius, and the Junian Manuscript was first printed in 1655, seven years before *Paradise Lost*. The two epics coincide in many points. The theme of both is the same: after the expulsion from heaven of the rebel angels, God creates man to fill the seats thus left vacant, and Satan ruins him for revenge. The conception of Satan and of Hell, so widely different from that of Dante and the Middle Ages, is the same with both poets. How Miltonic is the description of the fall of the angels as told by the elder poet:

> Then was the mighty wroth, Heaven's highest Lord
> Cast him from his high seat, for he had brought
> His master's hate on him. His favor lost,
> The Good was angered against him, and he
> Must therefore seek the depths of Hell's fierce pains,
> Because he strove against Heaven's highest Lord,
> Who shook him from His favor, cast him down
> To the deep dales of Hell, where he became
> Devil. The fiend with all his comrades fell
> From Heaven, Angels, for three nights and days,
> From Heaven to Hell.[1]

And how natural to us is this picture of Satan bound in the fiery pit and soliloquizing on his fallen estate:

> Most unlike this narrow place
> To that which once we knew, high in Heaven's realm.
>
> . . . .
>
> Woe! Woe! had I the power of my hands,
> And for a season, for one winter's space,
> Might be without; then, with this host I—
> But iron binds me round; this coil of chains

[1] Morley's translation.

Rides me ; I rule no more ; close bonds of Hell
Hem me their prisoner. Above, below,
Here is vast fire, and never have I seen
More loathly landscape ; never fade the flames.

. . . .

May we then not plan vengeance, pay Him back
With any hurt, since shorn by Him of light?
Now He has set the bounds of a mid-earth
Where after His own image He has wrought
Man, by whom He will people once again
Heaven's kingdom with pure souls. Therefore, intent
Must be our thought that, if we ever may,
On Adam and his offspring we may wreak
Revenge, and, if we can devise a way,
Pervert His will.[1]

There are passages in Cædmon as terse, condensed, vivid, as any in Milton, for instance, the description of Hell, the land

That was lere of light and that was full of flame,
Fire's horror huge ;

or where the fiend took wing and

Smote the flame in two with fiendish craft.

The conception of the poem is thoroughly Teutonic. The deep Northern gloom and pathos pervade it. Satan is a powerful folk-lord seeking revenge. Bound and riveted down beyond all hope of escape he calls to his war-band: " Stand by me, comrades, now. If ever in former days I gave you cause for joy, 't is now you can repay." But there is no need for appeal; his " shoulder-companions" are true Teutons, who will die ere they leave their chief in distress. It is this element in Cædmon's work that explains its similarity to Milton's. The

[1] Morley's translation.

two poems coincide in conception, and to some degree even in detail, yet this does not of necessity make *Paradise Lost* an imitation. It simply shows how marked and persistent has been the English personality, for it is safe to say with Taine that " Milton's Satan exists already in Cædmon's as the picture exists in the sketch because both have their model in the race."

The figure of Cædmon in English literature, despite uncertainty and conjecture, is vast and impressive:

> He was one of those gifted men [says Guest] who have stamped deeply and lastingly upon the literature of their country the impress of their own minds and feelings. He was the first Englishman—it may be the first individual of Gothic race—who exchanged the gorgeous images of the old mythology for the chaster beauties of Christian poetry. From the sixth to the twelfth century he appears to have been the great model whom all imitated and few could equal. For upward of five centuries he was the father of English poetry; and when his body was discovered in the reign of our first Henry it seems to have excited no less reverence than those of the kings and saints by which it was surrounded.—*History of English Rhythms.*

REQUIRED READING. The translation from *Genesis* in Morley, ii., 81.

2. Bæda (673–735)

The father of English learning.—*Burke.*

Life. (Autobiographical sketch and letter of Cuthbert at the end of the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bohn ed.; **Browne,** *The Venerable Bede.*)

To turn from Cædmon to Bæda is like leaving a Saxon mead-hall to enter the solemn aisles of a cathedral. In one we have wild song in a barbaric tongue, full of energy and rude beauty; in the other graceful periods in the polished language of a foreign civilization. Bæda more

than Cædmon is the representative literary figure of the Northumbrian era. We may be sure that had this illustrious scholar added a chapter to his church history on the literary development of his native province, he would have passed rapidly over all writings in the vernacular. However necessary they may have been considered to the education and spiritual development of the common people, writings in the native tongue could have had little literary weight when compared with productions in the Latin. For the English was a barbarous tongue: it was extremely limited in its vocabulary; it could not make nice discriminations; it was weak in conjunctions; it confounded nouns with adjectives and even adverbs; it was guttural and harsh; it had no standards of good usage, no written literature. The Latin, on the contrary, was one of the most flexible and polished instruments ever made by man. The English was changing rapidly, the Latin was fixed and permanent. Little wonder it is that those who desired literary finish and literary permanence turned to the Latin. As late as the Elizabethan Age, Bacon wrote his *Novum Organum* in Latin since he dared not trust that great work to the vernacular. The wonder is that anything during the early era was written in the native tongue.

We cannot, therefore, simply because from a standpoint twelve centuries away we see the great significance of the use of this early English, refuse to consider, as many have done, the Latin writings of the era. They played their part, and a leading one it was, in the development of English civilization and English literature. To neglect this element is to get a partial and distorted view of the beginnings. We need not consider all of the

monastic writers. We may take Bæda as the type and consider him alone.

Few lives, even of scholars, have been more bare of incident than his. From early childhood, when he was left an orphan, until his death, he dwelt in the monastery at Jarrow, working day after day his long life through without an idle hour or a needless pause. "While attentive to the rule of my order," he writes, "and the service of the Church, my constant pleasure lay in learning or teaching or writing." Thus without incident or break he passed his life. The fiery zeal of Wilfrid and Biscop displayed itself in action. It was for them to rule synods, build monasteries, and ransack Christendom for ecclesiastical stores. Bæda's zeal was no less earnest, but it turned into quieter channels. The costly books that Wilfrid collected with such energy were a miscellaneous heap until Bæda arranged them and digested them. With magnificent courage he plunged into this wilderness of tomes, nor did he cease his labors until from their pages he had reconstructed the temple of human knowledge. The range of his themes is surprising: he was a tireless biblical commentator; he made an encyclopædia of all that the Church Fathers had said about the Scriptures; he was a scientist six centuries before Roger Bacon, and he even left his books to study nature at first-hand; he wrote treatises on mathematics, grammar, rhetoric, music, philosophy, language, and many other subjects. The forty-five books of his composition form an encyclopædia of the learning of his age. And all this he did in the spare hours left after Church duties and after giving daily instruction to a school of six hundred monks.

But the work that most endears him to the modern

world is his *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, which he completed three years before his death. His motive, as the title indicates, was to trace the religious development of Britain; but so closely were Church and State connected that he found it necessary to give the secular history as well. The work is therefore a complete history of England from the earliest times until 731, but the valuable portion is that following the year 597, all that precedes being derived from Gildas, Orosius, and the *Life of St. Germanus*. In his historical methods Bæda was singularly modern. He had the papal archives at Rome searched for original documents, and he spared no pains in collecting materials from eye-witnesses and contemporaries. As a result we can rely implicitly on any statement that Bæda declares to be true, a fact of the utmost importance when we remember that, in the words of Green, "all that we really know of the century and a half that follows the landing of Augustine we know from him." The book is permeated with the monastic spirit. Its author delights in recording what he believes to have been miracles; he draws spiritual lessons from everything; and he is constantly detecting curious symbolisms and analogies. All this, instead of detracting from the value of the book, makes it the more delightful. The line between fact and miracle is sharply drawn. Often in his stories of saints who have seen angels or heard miraculous voices or received divine recovery from disease, we catch charming glimpses into the life of the times and the spirit of the age. Even aside from its historical value the book is charming reading, as interesting in parts as a novel, and the gentle piety and sweetness that breathe from its pages make it holy reading even to-day. Brooke

declares that there is in the writings of the whole monastic school of the era "a religious tenderness, a fuller love of quiet beauty, an imaginative heavenliness, which our sacred poetry has never lost."

The story of Bæda's last hours as related by his pupil Cuthbert has often been told:

> During these days he labored to compose two works well worthy to be remembered, besides the lessons we had from him, and singing of psalms: viz., he translated the Gospel of St. John . . . into our own tongue for the benefit of the Church, and some collections out of the *Book of Notes* of Bishop Isidorus. . . . On Wednesday he ordered us to write with all speed what he had begun; and this done, we walked till the third hour with the relics of saints, according to the custom of that day. There was one of us with him who said to him, "Most dear master, there is still one chapter wanting." . . . He answered, "Take your pen and make ready and write fast," which he did. . . . He passed the day joyfully till evening, and the boy above mentioned, said, "Dear master, there is yet one sentence not written." He answered, "Write quickly." Soon after the boy said, "The sentence is now written." He replied, "It is well; you have said the truth. It is ended." . . . And on the pavement of his little cell, singing "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," when he had named the Holy Ghost he breathed his last and so departed to the heavenly kingdom.

REQUIRED READING. Cuthbert's Letter, Morley, ii., 153.

CHAPTER VI

ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

THE NORTHUMBRIAN SCHOOL (680–782)—*Continued.*

3. Cynewulf

The most many-sided, prolific, and, we might say, greatest poet of his time.—*Ten Brink.*

Life. (**Brooke,** Chs. xxiii.–xxiv. ; **Morley,** ii., Ch. ix. ; **Azarius,** *Development of Old English Thought ;* **Earle,** Ch. xi. ; **Ten Brink,** i., p. 48.)

Until comparatively recent times the Cædmon mentioned in Bæda's history stood solitary as the only Anglo-Saxon poet whose name we knew. In the year 1840, however, while editing the old poem *Elene*, Kemble discovered that several words in the epilogue were runes, and that they spelled out the word CYNEWULF. Since then three other Anglo-Saxon poems, *Juliana*, *Christ*, and *Fates of the Apostles*, have been found to be signed in the same way, and the conclusion that the four are the work of one poet by the name of Cynewulf has been generally accepted.

Of the identity and biography of this newly discovered singer we know nothing. Of his personality, however, we can tell considerable, for the work that he has left us abounds in personal allusions. All of his poems are religious, and their materials are drawn mostly from Bible homilies and Church legends. The *Juliana* is the story of a Christian maiden who submitted heroically to torture

and even to martyrdom rather than take as a husband one not a Christian. This and *The Fates of the Apostles* need not detain us. While they contain passages of undoubted power, both poems are far below the rest of Cynewulf's work. His true strength is shown in his *Christ* and his *Elene*, both of which he entered upon with his whole soul.

The *Christ* is a trilogy treating successively of the Nativity, the Ascension, and the Day of Judgment. Scattered through it are passionate lyrics, prayers, hymns, bursts of praise and joy. Parts are dramatic, suggesting the miracle plays of later years; everywhere there is loftiness of thought and sustained power.

In the *Elene* Cynewulf treats the old legend of Constantine's vision of the cross; the expedition of his mother Helena (Elene is the Greek form) to Jerusalem; the finding of the cross and the nails, and the conversion of the Jew Cyriarcus. Like all of Cynewulf's work, the poem is deficient in plot and in constructive art: the finding of the cross is the climax, and yet after this episode the narrative drags on and on for many pages. The characters are mere puppets, and the movement of the narrative is often retarded by tiresome repetitions. But despite all these faults, there is unmistakable dramatic power about the poem. With little trouble it could be turned into a miracle play, each of the chapters furnishing a scene. Parts of it are powerfully conceived, and it is hard to escape from the conviction that the whole poem was written in heat, that it was poured from a full heart. We know from the epilogue that it was composed during a time of spiritual crisis. Old age was upon the poet; he was

stained with crimes,
Fettered with sins, pained with sorrows,
Bitterly bound, banefully vexed.[1]

He sought aid from books; late into the night he labored with them, and at last Heaven revealed to him a vision of the "tree of glory" as the emblem of victory. The legend of *Elene*, then, was typical of his own experience, and the poem burst from the full heart of the singer. Judas is none other than Cynewulf himself, and his passionate prayer for guidance came from the depths of the poet's soul.

The art of the poem lies in its artlessness. It has not a trace of self-consciousness, of effort, of constraint. The poet again and again allows the wild heathen fire in his blood to blaze up unchecked. When Helena, for instance, set out on her journey to find oversea the true cross, we find him picturing a scene that had happened many a time along the Viking coast when fleets of black war-ships were making ready to harry the Saxon shore:

The steeds of the sea
Round the shore of the ocean were standing,
Cabled sea-horses, at rest on the water.
. . . Then severally hastened
Over the mark-paths, band after band.
Then they loaded with battle-sarks,
With shields and spears, with mail-clad warriors,
With men and women, the steeds of the sea. . . .
Then they let o'er the billows the foamy ones go,
The high wave-rushers. The hull oft received
O'er the mingling of waters the blows of the waves.
There might he see who that voyage beheld . . .
Burst o'er the pathway the sea-wood, hasten
Neath swelling sails, the sea-horse play.[2]

[1] Garnett's translation.

[2] Garnett's translation.

Cynewulf is a stronger singer than Cædmon, than any early English poet save the creator of *Beowulf*. In Cædmon we had lofty flights, some of them the highest efforts of the Anglo-Saxon muse; in Cynewulf we have sustained power. Cædmon, kept close to the Scripture text; Cynewulf constantly wanders far from authorities, and, like Chaucer, tells the tale anew so that it becomes his own. Cædmon, while deeply religious, and devout even to asceticism, belonged, after all, to the first generation of Christians; with Cynewulf Christianity had penetrated deeper; it was a part of his birthright, and not often does his heathen blood rise to his eyes and brain and make him to forget. Cædmon's songs are all in the major key, full of hope and joy; Cynewulf sang a minor song, his was a sad soul,—doubtless he lived in the melancholy days of his country's decline.

Such was Cynewulf, a true poet with a soul as sensitive as gossamer. In youth, as such natures often will, he had plunged into the mire of worldly life; he had seen much, he had suffered much. In old age we find him sad and serious, oppressed by the hollowness of life. His cry comes to us strangely like that of Hrothgar in *Beowulf*, strangely like that of Macbeth in Shakespeare. How thoroughly English, how familiar is his lament:

> To each one is wealth
> Fleeting 'neath heaven, treasures of earth
> Pass 'neath the clouds likest to wind,
> When before men it mounts up aloud,
> Roars round the clouds, raging rushes,
> And then all at once silent becomes,
> In narrow prison closely confined,
> Strongly repressed. So passes this world.[1]

[1] Garnett's translation.

Cynewulf is a long step away from Cædmon toward the typical churchman of the Middle Ages: introspective, dreamy, mystic, dwelling on thoughts of the emblems of Christianity until he sees visions, musing on his unworthiness and sin until he despises the life that is and lives only in the life to be. He is but the logical result of the combination of Christianity with the Teutonic nature. He shows that the seeds of Puritanism were already planted ten centuries before Cromwell and Milton.

REQUIRED READING. Garnett's translation of *Elene*. For text see Kent's edition of *Elene*, *Library of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, vol. vi., and Cook's *Cynewulf's Christ*.

The Cynewulfian Cycle. He must needs have a steady hand who would steer safely through the reefs of Cynewulfian criticism. The temptation to leave the known path and to wander into romantic conjecture is well-nigh overpowering. Critics of the highest authority have at different times attributed to Cynewulf almost every known piece of Anglo-Saxon literature, including *Beowulf* and the primal poetry. Full biographies of the poet have been constructed by drawing from this and that poem of which he may have been the author. Such summaries, however, in view of our present knowledge of Cynewulf, must be viewed with caution; at best they are only expressions of opinion.

In the Exeter and Vercelli books the poems *Guthlac*, *Descent into Hell*, *Riddles*, *The Phœnix*, *The Vision of the Rood*, and *Andreas* resemble closely in tone and style the signed work of Cynewulf, and have, therefore, almost by common consent been regarded as the work of this singer. The evidence is wholly internal. For instance, in the *Vision of the Rood* the poet declares that

Spotted with sins,
Wounded sorely with vices, the glorious Tree
As it blissfully shone, I saw worthily robed,
And with gold all adorned, nobly covered with gems.[1]

The tree speaks to him, recounts its pathetic story, and begs him to tell the vision among men. From that moment a change came to his life.

I have known
In all my hours many an hour of longing;
Now my life's comfort is that I may seek
The Tree of Victory. . . .
Now for defense I look but to the Cross.
I have not many precious friends on earth,
From the world's joys they have gone hence to seek
The King of Glory. I now day by day
Expect the time when the Lord's Cross, that here
On earth I once beheld, shall take me forth
From this weak life and bring me where is joy.[2]

No one can fail to note the close similarity to *Elene.*

The *Riddles*, of which there are ninety-three in all, have been attributed to Cynewulf since, according to Leo and other eminent scholars, the first of the series contains the poet's name in acrostic. If they are indeed Cynewulf's, they must have been written early in life during his career as a wandering scop, and they thus furnish considerable material for a biography of his early years. Of the other poems ascribed to Cynewulf, *Guthlac*, *The Phœnix*, and *Andreas* alone need be mentioned. *Guthlac*, like *Juliana*, records the life and death of a saint. At first it drags painfully, but at length its manner suddenly changes, and its ending is worthy of Cynewulf when at his best. *The Phœnix* is an allegory. In the fabled bird

[1] Morley's translation.

[2] Morley's translation.

that lived for a thousand years, then flew to the desert where it was consumed by the heat only to rise re-created from its own ashes, the poet saw typified the life and resurrection of Christ. The *Andreas* is a masterpiece fully equal in power of conception and vigor of treatment to the *Elene* and the *Christ*. It is an account of the legendary adventures of St. Andrew who voyaged to Mermedonia to rescue St. Matthew. The poet who wrote it was a passionate lover of the sea; the salt breezes of the great ocean surge through it as they do through no other Anglo-Saxon poem. It is strongly conceived and vigorously executed. It differs from the known work of Cynewulf in that its plot and mechanical construction are carefully handled. It strikes the true epic note; parts of it suggest *Beowulf*.

In all these poems, save perhaps the *Andreas*, we have the Cynewulfian subjectivity, the minor strain, the defects in constructive art. If they belong to Cynewulf, they modify in no respect our previous estimate of the poet formed from a study of the four signed poems. They enlarge the picture and add details, but they bring no discordant elements. If they are not Cynewulf's, we can say with conservatism that they were influenced by the work of this singer; that they were done, perhaps, by disciples who followed carefully in the footprints of their master.

[For the text of *Andreas*, see Baskervill's edition, *Library of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, vol. iii.]

Judith. In the same manuscript with *Beowulf* there is the fragment of an old heroic saga which, all things considered, is the most remarkable production that we have thus far seen. Only three of the original twelve cantos

remain, but by great good fortune these preserve the climax and the end of the poem. The author of *Judith* and the date of its composition are unknown. Concerning few things have Anglo-Saxon scholars differed so widely; almost every date from 680 to the tenth century has been assigned to it. Some have confidently claimed it as Cædmon's, others have attributed it to Cynewulf, and still others to a writer of the Cynewulfian school. Professor Cook propounds the rather plausible theory that "the poem *Judith* was composed in or about the year 856 in gratitude for the deliverance of Wessex from the fury of the heathen Northmen, and dedicated to the adopted daughter of England, the pride, the hope, the darling of the nation." In the face of such diversity of opinion, it is safe to say that we know nothing sure about the author or the era of the poem.

The theme of *Judith* is taken from the Apocrypha. The Assyrian host under Holofernes is laying siege to the Hebrew city, and on the eve of triumph the great leader gives a magnificent banquet to his lords. At its close, drunken to the verge of helplessness, he orders the Hebrew maiden Judith to be brought into his tent, and then falls into a drunken stupor. Judith has her enemy within her power; she hews off his head and steals forth with the ghastly trophy into the Hebrew camp. The poem closes with the reception of the heroine by her countrymen, the attack upon the enemy at daybreak, and the complete rout of the Assyrians.

Mutilated as it is, this poem is one of the finest in the whole range of Anglo-Saxon literature. The language is of the most polished and brilliant character; the meter harmonious, and varied with admirable skill. The action is dramatic and energetic, culminating impressively in the catastrophe

of Holofernes' death ; but there is none of that pathos which gives *Beowulf* so much of its power. The whole poem breathes only of triumph and warlike enthusiasm. In constructive skill and perfect command of his foreign subject the unknown author of *Judith* surpasses both Cædmon and Cynewulf, while he is certainly not inferior to either of them in command of language and meter.—*Sweet.*

REQUIRED READING. Cook's or Garnett's translation. The best edition of the text is Cook's.

4. The Scholars of York

(**Brooke,** Ch. xxvi.; **West,** *Life of Alcuin.*) In Bæda's day the literary capitol of Northumbria and of England had been the monastery of Jarrow, but no sooner had the great scholar died than the leadership passed to York. Here were collected the riches of Northumbrian learning and literature; here under Archbishops Ecgberht and Æthelberht was established what was in everything except name the first English university. Its library was the best in Europe outside of Rome; its corps of instructors included the ablest scholars of their age; its curriculum covered every realm of knowledge. It produced an abundance of Latin works, and it copied out and preserved the vanishing songs of the native singers. The books that afterwards were to be translated into the dialect of Wessex by Ælfred and his school came without a doubt from the great literary center of York.

The brightest alumnus of this school was Alcuin, who from infancy until middle age resided in its cloisters. It was at its highest point of prosperity in 782; but in this year, owing to the death of Æthelfrith and the departure of Alcuin, its decline began. The great scholar left none

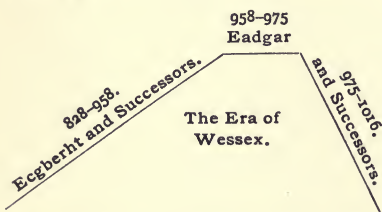
too soon. In less than ten years the Danes had made their first descent upon the northern coasts. Soon they had overrun all Northumbria and had fallen with ferocity upon the monasteries. It devolved upon Alcuin to bear the precious shoots of English learning across the Channel and to transplant them into continental soil, thus saving them from utter destruction. "It belongs," says Brooke, "to the glory of England to say that it was an English scholar of York who exactly at the right time bore off to the continent the whole of English learning, and out of English learning built up a new world."

III. The Era of Wessex (871–1016)

The Middle Period, 780–871. The kingdom of Mercia, whose rising power humbled Northumbria and whose brilliancy filled the eighth century in England, need not detain us, since it produced nothing of literary value. Despite defeat and humiliation, the north still continued to be the center of Anglo-Saxon letters; the school of York was never more brilliant than during the reign of Offa, under whom Mercia reached its highest point. But both the political power of the Midlands and the intellectual supremacy of the north were destined to a speedy fall. The ninth century with its Danes was another era of darkness. Its horror and uncertainty can hardly be imagined. "Throughout the whole of the ninth century," says Allen, "and the early part of the tenth the whole history of England is the history of a perpetual pillage. No man who sowed could tell whether he might reap or not. The Englishman lived in constant fear of life and goods; he was liable at any moment to be called

out against the enemy. Whatever little civilization had ever existed in the country died out altogether."

Wessex. The story of Ælfred and the kingdom of Wessex that unaided and alone broke the Danish wave and gave to England a new era need not be dwelt upon. The great King brought order out of confusion; he organized a regular and well-disciplined army and he built the first English navy; he made laws and enforced them until perfect order reigned from the Thames southward to the sea; he rebuilt the ruined city of London; he restored communication with the continent; he reëstablished the Church, founded schools, and with his own hand gave his countrymen the beginnings of a literature. During his reign was born the kingdom of England.



Under the strong kings who followed him the rival provinces were united never again to be divided, and the foundations of modern England were laid broad and deep. The power of Wessex gradually increased until the era of Eadgar and Archbishop Dunstan, after which it rapidly declined.

West-Saxon Literature. Reasoning from the analogy of Northumberland and its literary greatness we might expect to find in Wessex the golden era of Anglo-Saxon literature. The soldiers of Ælfred had faced a peril as awful as ever threatened England in the days of the Armada; they were victorious after a desperate struggle by sheer English pluck and obstinacy; they stood around a sovereign more worthy even than Elizabeth—a hero of

colossal mold; they saw the fatherland which they had hallowed with their blood taking a firm place, expanding, and developing. The strong, exultant spirit of patriotism, of action, of a new view of their ultimate destiny, was fierce within them. England was thrilling with a new life, a new hope. But no literary outpouring resulted, the fresh voice of the nation did not burst into song. The era was one of prose, of imitation, of translation, of paraphrase. It was not creative; it turned into its own dialect the songs that had burst a century before from the heart of Northumbria.

The causes for this literary inactivity were many. The Church was in a sad state of decay. The enthusiasm, the apostolic freshness and sincerity that had marked the northern outburst of Christianity were wholly lacking. There had come the inevitable age of reaction. Asser declared that " during many previous years the love of a monastic life had utterly decayed from the nation," that " they looked with contempt upon it." When Ælfred commenced to reëstablish the monasteries he had to send abroad even for the common brethren. But the growth was a forced one, and it soon became full of corruption. The life of the spirit being thus dead, and the monasteries, which in this age were the only libraries and schools and centers of literary effort, having fallen to so low an ebb, it is not hard to account for the literary deadness of Wessex. It was a worldly, practical, material age that followed the era of song. Schools were founded for the laity, and learning beçame secular. Politics and the study of practical things took the place so long occupied by religion and poetry. Prose treatises on medicine, law, history, philosophy, began to appear. From first to last

it was an era of prose. As Cædmon, the earliest singer, dominated the whole chorus of Northumbrian song, so Ælfred, the first West-Saxon writer, gave with his practical and business-like translations the keynote for the whole literature of Wessex. Then, again, the south was less poetic than the north. The Celtic element—the genius, the enthusiasm, the wild fancy of the Irish, who had so influenced the Northumbrian poetry—was conspicuously absent. The wild natural scenery of the north, which was in itself an inspiration, had no counterpart in Wessex. There is another reason which almost of itself might explain the absence of West-Saxon poetry. No poetic school can survive forever. The wild native note no longer satisfied; the mind of the nation was growing away from the ancient forms. This appears even in the later Northumbrian poetry. It is more and more full of experiment: rhyme, the dropping of alliteration, the varying of line length, the introduction of new meters. Everywhere in the little West-Saxon poetry that is left us is evident a groping for something new. But there was no new source of inspiration, and there arose no great creator who could draw out of the depths of his own genius the materials for a new cycle of song. It was not until the romance of Southern Europe had stirred the English heart that a new era began in English literature.

1. *King Ælfred (849–901)*

The most perfect character in history.—*Freeman.*

Authorities. The earliest *Life of Ælfred* is by **Asser,** the King's constant companion (Bohn); the most scholarly and critical life is **Dr. Pauli's** (Bohn); the best popular

life is **Hughes'**; the best for the ordinary student is **York-Powell's**, in *Heroes of the Nations.*

In far-seeing sagacity, in benevolent enterprise, in hard-headed common sense and worldly wisdom, King Ælfred reminds us of our own Benjamin Franklin. He was a literary man for precisely the same reasons that he was a law-giver, a military and naval organizer, a builder of cities and churches, an educator. The destruction of the monasteries and the degradation of the people had blotted out all learning and literature; a nation could attain to no height of civilization without these, so the King with his own hand sought to spread among all his subjects the works that in his opinion would be of greatest educational value.

Naturally the book that came first under the King's hand, when once he had determined to make a literature for his people, was that work which for many centuries, even to Chaucer's day, headed every list of "best books," —the *Consolation* of the Roman statesman and philosopher, Boëthius. Ælfred turned this into a handbook of ethics and practical wisdom. He made it thoroughly Christian in sentiment; he removed from it all that might perplex his English readers, and by changing its allusions to persons and places he gave it local color, so that the work, although a translation, is almost Ælfred's own. From philosophy it is but a step to history. His subjects should know the history of their own land. There was but one book that could tell the story, the monumental work of Bæda. Ælfred edited the text with judicious care, having constantly in mind the needs of his people. He abridged, corrected, commented, and added with a

Boëthius' Consolation of Philosophy.
Bæda's Ecclesiastical History.
Orosius' Universal History.
Gregory's Pastoral Care.

free hand. From the history of England to a compendium of general history was a natural step. The best universal history then available was that by Orosius, a Spanish churchman, a work that had been written at the request of Pope Gregory. With this Ælfred took even greater liberties than with the Bæda. The impress of his personality is everywhere upon it; nowhere can one get a more charming conception of the King, of his homely, honest character, his view of life, his earnestness, his limitations, than by comparing this translation with the original. When he comes to Nero he comments freely upon the evils of tyranny and the duties of kings; he gives his conceptions of civil government and religious duty; he makes naïve remarks concerning persons and events, and he sets the historian right concerning such things as the geography of Iceland and of Cæsar's marches in Britain. In one place he breaks abruptly from the text to give a long account of the voyages of Othere and Wulfstan into the unknown seas to the north of Scandinavia, as he had himself heard it from the lips of the adventurers. Last of all, the King, realizing the low religious ebb to which his people had come, made for their spiritual nourishment a translation of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*. Upon this work the royal translator expended the greatest care. No book was more sadly needed. Its picture of the ideal Christian pastor, of his humility, unselfishness, and unworldliness was in marked contrast with the actual Saxon churchman of the era. So zealous was the King in his work of reform that he prefaced his translation with an earnest exhortation to the clergy, and commanded that one copy of the book be sent to each bishop's see in the kingdom.

It is significant that Ælfred, in thus striving to educate his people, made use wholly of the vernacular. The Danish scourge gave new life to the English language. The English had learned out of sheer necessity to use their own tongue, when continental nations were using the Latin. As a result, while the South of Europe was speaking broken Latin and building up Romance languages, England was speaking exclusively in her own tongue, and her King, who earnestly desired to bring back scholarship to his people, must do it in the vernacular or not at all.

Thus did Ælfred strive to promote in his kingdom learning, literature, and godliness. He realized fully the condition of himself and his subjects, and he could adapt his work to their needs. Thus it is that while his writings are translations merely, they are nevertheless permeated with his personality, and they must be reckoned with as among the most widely influential elements that have entered into the building up of the English character.

SUGGESTED READINGS. Ælfred's *Boëthius*, with translation (Bohn ed.); Sweet's *Extracts from Ælfred's Orosius*, Clarendon Press; Preface to Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, and Bæda's account of Cædmon in MacLean's *Old and Middle English Reader;* the Preface of the *Pastoral Care*, with extracts from that work, and the *Voyages of Othere and Wulfstan*, Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*.

2. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*

(**Earle,** Ch. vii; *Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, **Plummer** and **Earle.**) As if fully conscious of the ultimate greatness of the nation of which they were the founders, the early Saxons, especially the men of Wessex, took

great pains to hand down a record of the deeds of the fathers. The movement seems to have started in early Northumbria, perhaps with Bæda. There is much evidence that the Worcester Chronicle, for instance, is but an enlargement of a northern original. But we know that about the time of Ælfred in all the leading monasteries books were kept in which annually were recorded the leading events of the year. Seven of these old chronicles have come down to us, and it is needless to say that their value is inestimable; that without them our knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon era would be fragmentary indeed. Altogether they cover the period between 449 and 1154, at first drawing almost wholly from Bæda, then continuing with short entries chiefly concerning kings and bishops, and later, during the glorious era of Wessex, swelling into really magnificent prose, varied here and there by an inserted battle poem, then falling off one by one until the Peterborough Chronicle alone remains to carry the story through the first century after the Conquest. There are many gaps in the narrative,—long periods when all the chronicles are silent; there are contradictions and false or worthless assertions; but on the whole the chronicles agree remarkably. "It would be difficult to point to any texts," says Earle, "through which the taste for living history—history in immediate contact with events—can better be cultivated."

In 937, instead of making the usual prose entry, the chronicler burst into a metrical description of the battle of Brunanburh. In this poem and the one on the battle of Maldon, which took place in 991, we catch the last full strains of the Anglo-Saxon harp.

REQUIRED READING. Tennyson's translation of the

Fight at Brunanburh. See also translation of this and the *Fight at Maldon*, by Garnett, in *Elene.* For text of the poems see most Anglo-Saxon Readers and Crow's *Maldon and Brunanburh, Library of Anglo-Saxon Literature*, vol. iv.

3. Ælfric (c. 955–c. 1020)

He is the voice of that great Church reform which is the most signal fact in the history of the latter half of the tenth century.—*Earle.*

Authorities. **Ten Brink,** Vol. i., pp. 133–140; **Earle,** *Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ch. x.; **Skeat,** *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints*, text and English translation; **Sweet,** *Selected Homilies of Ælfric*, Clarendon Press; **Azarius,** *Development of Old English Thought*, Ch. viii.; **White,** *Ælfric, a New Study of his Life and Writings*, with full bibliography, Yale Studies.

The Monastic Revival. The writers of Wessex fall into two schools: the earlier group that gathered about Ælfred and occupied itself mainly with translations, and the later group that gave voice to the great era of Church reform. The half century between Ælfred and Eadgar was a time of material advancement; the kingdom of Wessex grew constantly in political power, but in learning and morality it gradually waned. The spirit of reaction against the fervent religious life of the early days had been aided by the Danish wars. Utter barbarism had swept over Northern England, destroying every monastery and every manuscript. The kingdom of Wessex had thrown all of its energies into the life-and-death struggle with the invaders. Everything, even the Church, was forgotten in the fierce conflict. For a century the English mind was busy with practical things: problems of defense, of organization, of finance, of ma-

terial development. All of the nation's energies and resources were demanded by its civil life. Despite the efforts of Ælfred, the Church gradually lost its power, and as it declined, as it fell more and more into the hands of small and unspiritual men, it became more and more a center of corruption. The rule enforcing celibacy was broken down; "the education of the clergy," says White, "and consequently of the people, had fallen with their morals and from the same causes." Everywhere the Church was drifting from the strict rules of the early days.

It was at this point that a reformer arose, a strong, far-seeing man, who had gained from the throne almost absolute power. In thirty years, beginning in 959, Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, completely reorganized the English Church. He turned out the secular clergy, built new monasteries, and infused a new spirit into monastic life; he insisted upon the strictest asceticism; he revived to some degree the old spirit of learning and culture, and prepared the way for a new school of ecclesiastical writers who worked almost wholly in prose.

Ælfric. The central literary figure of the period was Ælfric, an ecclesiastic of the new movement, a man who combined the earnestness and the simple, unselfish zeal of Aldhelm and the early Christian workers with the practical common sense of King Ælfred and the school of Wessex. Educated in the Benedictine monastery of Winchester at the time when it was, perhaps, the literary and intellectual center of England, Ælfric had early been turned toward a scholarly life. The atmosphere of reform, of renewed holiness, and reawakened intellectual life that so filled his age early affected him, and it aroused in him

the missionary spirit. First at Winchester, then at the Abbey of Cernel, and finally at Eynsham, near Oxford, where in 1005 he was made abbot, he devoted himself with all the enthusiasm and earnestness of a Bæda to exhortation and teaching, to translation and literary production, and to humble work among all classes. Like Ælfred, who in many respects was his predecessor, and like Wyclif, of whom he was the forerunner, he would reach the poor and the ignorant. A few works he wrote in Latin, but the most of his writings were for those who knew no tongue but their own. He made a Latin grammar, carefully adapting it to the needs of beginners, he translated parts of the Scriptures, he made compilations from the works of Bæda, he translated lives of the saints, and he wrote a large mass of sermons, in all of which he had constantly in mind the needs of the common people.

His *Homilies*, eighty in number, charming little sermons arranged for nearly every Sabbath and feast-day of the Christian year, are his best-known work. Few of them are original: they are adapted largely from St. Gregory and the Church Fathers, and they seldom wander far from the originals. Their charm lies in their artlessness and their wonderful adaptation to the audiences for which they were written. The author's first desire was to be understood by all, hence his simplicity and clearness. His lesson came from his heart, hence the power and the sweetness of his lines. They are readable even now with pleasure and spiritual profit.

Ælfric's writings form the link between the old native poetry and the homely but strong native prose of Wyclif. The preacher would bring home to his simple hearers the

great truths of holy writ; he would make vivid to them the events of biblical history and the lives of the saints, and he appealed to the strongest literary passion within them,—the inborn love for the old Saxon minstrelsy. His prose is full of alliteration, of balanced structure, and even of rhyme. We can imagine the preacher telling the deeds of saints in the "half-musical recitative" of the old gleemen, and arriving at much the same result as did they. "Ælfric's lives of saints," says Morley, "are actually marked for rhythmical delivery by division into lines convenient for recitation. They are not poems, but they bring to the Church a form of story-telling, applied to the lives of saints, that had been applied to the deeds of heroes in the mead-hall."

The influence of Ælfric, while not a great one, cannot be overlooked. His genius, like that of all the West-Saxon school, was not creative; he added little that was strictly original to the sum of English literature; what influence he might have had as a stylist was well-nigh destroyed by the Norman Conquest, which relegated all Anglo-Saxon culture to the background; yet the pure and earnest life of Ælfric and the example of his clear and simple English were not wholly lost. His *Homilies* were copied again and again until long after the Conquest, and while it is impossible to estimate accurately the part that they played in the formation of the prose of Wyclif, we know that it was by no means inconsiderable.

The Era of Wessex, then, despite the heroic efforts of Ælfred and the temporary blazing up of the embers during the reign of Eadgar, was a period of gradual literary decline. The Anglo-Saxon literature stood com-

plete. It had begun in heat with a full, original note, but this had been repeated until it had become jaded and outworn. It had listened to no melodies but its own, and the inevitable result had followed. Artistic prose was a new variation; it satisfied for a time, but new themes and new tones must come at length, or English song must be forever still. They came with appalling suddenness, in a way quite unlooked for. For two centuries and more the Anglo-Saxon voice was utterly silent, and when next it was heard it proclaimed that the old era had forever passed away and that a new and nobler one had begun.

SUGGESTED READING. "The Creation" and "St. Cuthbert" in Sweet's *Selected Homilies of Ælfric*, Clarendon Press.

TABLE I.—EARLY BRITAIN

CELTIC BRITAIN.	From Prehistoric times until the Roman Conquest. —— 43 A.D.	55 B.C. Cæsar in Britain.
ROMAN BRITAIN.	43–409. Roman Domination. 409–449. Period of weakness. The withdrawal of the Romans left England the prey of invaders.	55. Defeat of Caractacus. 61. Revolt of Boadicea. 78–84. Agricola. 409. Romans leave Britain. 410. Sack of Rome by Alaric.
ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN.	449–597. Anglo-Saxon Conquest. The Dark Period, since it blotted out Celtic Christianity and since it is unrecorded. 597–686. Christian Conquest. Struggle for the Overlordship 597–867. 588–685. Era of Northumbria. From the beginning of the kingdom to the death of Ecgfrith. 685–828. Era of Mercia. 828–1016. Era of Wessex. The appearance of the Danes ended the struggle for the overlordship of Britain.	449–588. Era of settlement. 597. Augustine lands in Kent. 617–633. Eadwine of Northumbria, overlord. 670–685. Ecgfrith of Northumbria, overlord. 675–704. Ethelred of Mercia, overlord. 716. Ethelbald of Mercia, overlord. 758–796. Offa. Mercia at its height. 787. Danes first land in England. 828. Ecgberht of Wessex, overlord of England. 866. First Danish settlement. 867. Danes conquer Northumbria. 871. Danes invade Wessex. 871–901. Ælfred. 912. Northmen settle Normandy. 958–975. Eadgar. Wessex at its height. 1013. All England submits to the Danes.
ANGLO-DANISH BRITAIN.	1016–1042. England under Danish kings. Since 866 the Danes had been pouring into England, until the island was almost as much Danish as Saxon.	1016–1035. Cnut. 1035–1042. Harold and Harthacnut.
ANGLO-NORMAN BRITAIN.	From 1042, when Edward the Confessor filled the English court with Normans, until the days of Edward III., when the two races became finally blended.	1042–1066. Edward the Confessor. 1066–1087. William I.

TABLE II.—LITERATURE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON AGE, 449–1016

From the Settlement to the Danish Conquest

I. *The Primal Poetry.* Dates unknown. First copied in Northumbria, perhaps by the School of York. Era of the scop and gleeman.	*Beowulf.* *The Fight at Finnesbruh.* *Waldhere.* *The Wanderer.* *The Seafarer.* *The Lament of Deor.*
II. *The Northumbrian School.* 680–782. From Cædmon to the departure of Alcuin from York.	
1. CÆDMON. d. 680.	*Song of the Creation.*
2. THE CÆDMON CYCLE. Codex Juniensis, Bodleian. Author supposed to be Cædmon.	*Genesis* *Exodus.* *Daniel.* *Christ and Satan.*
3. BÆDA, 673–735. Wrote in Latin. Foremost scholar of his age.	*Ecclesiastical History of England.*
4. CYNEWULF. Known only through runes affixed to four Anglo-Saxon poems. A few personal facts known through internal evidence.	*Juliana.* *Christ.* *Fates of the Apostles.* *Elene.*
5. THE CYNEWULFIAN CYCLE. Unsigned poems supposed to have been written by Cynewulf or his disciples.	*Riddles.* *Guthlac.* *Descent into Hell.* *The Phœnix.* *The Vision of the Rood.* *Andreas.*
6. THE AUTHOR OF JUDITH.	
7. THE SCHOLARS OF YORK. Best known figure, Alcuin. The complete wreck of Northumbria by the Danes closed the era and created a century of darkness.	
III. *The Era of Wessex,* 871–1016. From Ælfred to Cnut.	
1. ÆLFRED (849–901). Tried by translation to give a vernacular literature to his people.	Translations of *Boëthius.* " *Bæda.* " *Orosius.* " *Gregory.*
2. THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLES. Several original songs inserted.	*Fight at Brunanburh.* " " *Maldon.*
3. ÆLFRIC (c. 955–c. 1020). Revived English prose. The era was a minor one of translation. Few works showing creative power produced until long after the Norman Conquest.	*Homilies.*

CHAPTER VII

NORMAN ENGLAND

1066–1350

Authorities. The standard authority is **Freeman,** *Norman Conquest;* the same author's *Short History of the Norman Conquest* covers the same field in epitome. Valuable short studies of the Conquest are **Johnson,** *The Normans in Europe,* in the Epoch series; and **Hunt,** *Norman England.* The most useful histories of the English language are **Lounsbury's** and **Emerson's.**

The Anglo-Saxon Era with its six centuries of isolation stands as a unique phenomenon in European history. When Italy and France and Germany were mere amorphous fragments of the Roman wreck, without individuality or fixed tongue, England had already evolved a marked personality, had supplied herself with a language, and had produced in it writings of surprising strength and variety. The Anglo-Saxon school of literature had arisen, flourished, and decayed before a single significant note had been sounded in the chorus of modern continental song. From every standpoint the era seems unique and lonely. A century and more of complete literary unproductiveness separated it from modern English literature, and when the silence was at length broken it was with a new tongue so unlike the old that the writings of Cædmon and Ælfred must now be read with lexicon and notes, like those of a foreign land.

On the Eve of the Conquest. Before leaving this well rounded and most important era, let us for a moment

look over England and note the changes which had been wrought by six centuries. The island was still a wild and barbarous land. Great forests full of wolves and wild boars and stags covered half its area, and in the east and south, where now are fertile meadows, there stretched vast sea-marshes screamed over by wild swan and heron. The fierce sea-rovers of earlier centuries had abandoned their ships and had settled down as landlords and farmers, and, as in the days of Tacitus, flocks and herds had become their chief wealth. Commerce, aside from a small trade in hides and wool and slaves exchanged for a few articles of luxury, there was none. Only the river-bottoms and the richest lands had been reclaimed for agriculture. Roads, with the exception of rude paths, were confined to the neighborhood of towns. Transportation was difficult, and communication with distant points was a work of time.

The legal codes reveal to us a people but little changed at heart from the fierce invaders of earlier days. They were still given to brawling and fighting and feuds, which ended often in blood. A statute had to be enacted to make it a crime to draw weapons in the public assembly. Murder, as in the time of Beowulf, was atoned for by the payment of blood-money according to the rank of the victim. The most severe penalties were connected with treachery to a lord. Woman was still protected and honored. As in the days of Tacitus, the stranger who approached a dwelling without shouting or blowing his horn was declared an outlaw and slain. Despite six humanizing centuries, the Englishman was still coarse and brutal, addicted to drunkenness, and, aside from a small class mostly to be found in the monasteries, he was

unlettered and grossly ignorant. He had added to that wild barbaric freedom which had made the perfect union of the different tribes almost impossible, an insular contempt for all the world beyond his little domain.

Outside the cities, society fell roughly into three groups: the gentleman class,—eorls or thanes, a large division which embraced all landholders from the great lord of noble birth down to the small landlord whose claim to distinction was the possession of five hides of land; the middle class, or churls, who worked the farms, who must go with the land they tilled, but who were allowed to hold land of their own; and, last of all, the thralls or slaves, remnants largely of the conquered Welsh, a degraded class, of which Wamba in *Ivanhoe* is a true picture. Fundamentally the society of the era was a feudal one. It was a recognized law that every churl or thrall must be attached to a lord or be declared an outlaw. The population was divided into groups,—great families, of which the thane was the head and his residence the center. Around it were arranged the rude huts of thrall and churl, who not only tilled the land but carried on a variety of industries, so that the little community was self-supporting and independent. Thus towns were rendered unnecessary. The members of this group usually passed their lives on the estate where they were born, seldom during their whole lives wandering beyond its limits. With very few exceptions, churls and thralls, and even thanes, were illiterate. The noble families might seek education, and even in later days send their sons to the French schools, but the great majority could neither read nor write. It must not be forgotten that almost all the literature produced in England up to

Chaucer's day was written to be read or recited aloud to interested listeners who were themselves unable to read.

The best land in the island was in the hands of the monasteries, whose stone walls, the only substantial architecture of the time, arose on every hand. These vast estates were worked by the monks with diligence and skill, so that the monasteries not only became self-supporting, but they yielded a surplus for trade. They were, moreover, manufacturing centers where skilled workmen congregated and wrought. Their influence has already been dwelt upon. The civilization of early England rose and fell just in proportion as these centers of intellectual energy waxed or waned.

There was as yet no national language. The nature of the settlement of Britain and the provincial character of the early history of the island had encouraged dialects, traces of which exist even to this day. At the time of the Conquest three were prominent: the Northern, the Midland, and the Southern, corresponding generally with the chief provinces of the island. These dialects differed widely. A man of Devonshire could hardly understand a man of York. Which of these dialects was to win and become the language of England? For three centuries, even until the days of Chaucer, the question remained unanswered.

SUGGESTED READING. Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake;* Lytton's *Harold, the Last of the Saxon Kings.*

Normandy. (**Du Chaillu,** *The Viking Age.*) The wave of Scandinavian invasion which in the ninth and tenth centuries rolled with such disastrous results upon Britain, fell with equal fury upon the lands across the Channel.

No sooner was the great Charlemagne dead than the black ships of the Northmen began to appear off every coast from the Rhine to the Tiber. For two centuries Western Europe lived in a perpetual reign of terror. Band after band of Vikings, saturated with slaughter, settled in the provinces of Gaul and quickly adopting the language and customs of the natives, were lost to view. Southern Europe received a fresh infusion of blood that was soon to put a new spirit into continental history. Only one Northman band retained to any degree its identity. The great Viking leader, Rolf or Rollo, had sailed up the Seine as far as Paris, but, beaten off there, had dropped down the river and taken possession of Rouen and the adjacent territory. So strong was his position that the West Frank King, Charles the Simple, made a treaty with him precisely as Ælfred had done with Guthrum in England, fixing the bounds beyond which he might not go. Thus arose the duchy of Normandy. The sea-rovers settled down as landlords and farmers; they married native wives, and with their usual versatility adopted the customs of the country. The children of the second generation, trained from infancy by French mothers, spoke the French tongue, and within a century the Normans, as they were now called, had become in reality a French people.

888. Final Division of Charlemagne's Empire.
888. Rollo Besieges Paris.
899. Rise of the West Franks.
912. Normandy Granted to Rollo.
912. Rise of Germany.
962. Rise of Italy.

The Norman Conquest. Under the successors of Rollo, Normandy became the leading province of France. It extended its territory and under William, the seventh duke, who proved to be one of the commanding figures in the world's history, successfully opposed even the

French king himself. But William's ambitions lay in another direction. For a long time a chain of circumstances had been forming to draw together England and Normandy. The last of the Saxon kings before the Danish interregnum had married Emma, daughter of the third Norman duke. Their son Edward, afterwards called the Confessor, was reared and educated in France, whither his father had fled upon the accession of Cnut, and when he was called to take the English throne he went in reality as a prince who had inherited a foreign kingdom. He filled his court with French nobles, to whom he gave many important offices and estates. From first to last his reign was more Norman than English. Upon his death, Duke William, the Norman ruler, announced himself as his legal successor, and the winning of what the great Duke considered his just rights quickly followed.

The Norman Conquest cannot be rightly understood without a careful consideration of William's position. He considered himself not a usurper but the true heir to the throne. His chief claims were four in number: through the mother of Edward he was in the royal line; the King had solemnly sworn to name him as his successor; Harold had also sworn to support him in his claim; the heir apparent had been set aside, and Harold, a perjurer, a man not of royal blood, had been elected King. Furthermore, the Pope had sanctioned the Duke's claim. However flimsy these pretensions may seem to-day, to William they were real and amply sufficient. It is doubtful whether for a moment he questioned his legal right to the throne. In every action of his later life he bore himself like a true and lawful king, who to gain his throne had to overcome

a rebellion headed by a usurper. This fact alone stamps the Norman Conquest as radically different from all earlier invasions. In the guise of direct successor of Edward and the Saxon line of kings, William could not displace the old institutions. He made no attempt to change the laws and the customs of the land or to alter the condition of the people otherwise than strictly according to the ancient laws. Those who had opposed him in his struggle for the throne were rebels, and as such their property was confiscate to the Crown. Those who had aided him deserved reward. If the greater part of the land of England changed from Saxon to Norman hands it was simply because the greater part of the Saxon landholders were disloyal to their King. Grant the absurd claim, so fully believed by William, and all the usurpation and oppression that followed are logical and inevitable.

Results of the Conquest. The sullen obstinacy of the English character, its tenacity, its stubborn fierceness, its unconquerable spirit even in the face of inevitable defeat have never been more conspicuous than during the struggle with William. The battle of Hastings was only the beginning. With marvelous energy the King crushed down opposition; he moved without hesitancy; he punished with frightful severity; he blotted out entire communities and confiscated whole shires—yet the English fought sullenly on. It was this unparalleled stubbornness, this dogged refusal to submit to the inevitable, that makes the Norman Conquest seem like the destruction of all landmarks. The island indeed passed through a furnace. At the close of William's reign the old nobility had well-nigh disappeared. The land was in the hands of Norman lords, whose great castles with their massive square towers

arose from every estate; society had practically reduced itself to two classes, Normans and Saxons. The old thanes had been thrust down, and the slaves had in reality become free, for the new lords made no distinctions. All who spoke the English tongue were looked upon with contempt—they were the ignorant masses who deserved neither consideration nor law. French was the language of court and hall; French ideas and French songs, save in the hovels of the poor and about the hearthstones of a few who had known better days, ruled supreme.

William's temperament was cold and merciless: he did few things in heat; he could cut like a surgeon to the very heart of things, heedless of present agony, mindful only of the future. The treatment was heroic, but it made England what she is to-day. In reality the great King cut away only weak elements. The curse of England from earliest times had been disunion; the fire that William kindled welded the island forever into a unity. The Conquest taught the English for the first time the meaning of discipline; it cut them forever from the barbarous North, and by bringing them into contact with the continent, modified to some degree their insular narrowness. It brought a fresh infusion of Celtic blood which tempered the sullen Northern gloom, and added vivacity and culture without weakening at all the stronger elements in the national character. Moreover it changed and strengthened the national tongue and the national literature.

But not all the changes brought in by William were destined to bear good fruit. The Conquest firmly established feudalism in England. The King gave confiscated lands as rewards for personal service, but he considered

the acceptance of these estates as a pledge for future service. Thus arose the barons, an active, warlike class destined to become a dominant factor in English history until after the Wars of the Roses. Each baron had jurisdiction over a large district in the midst of which stood his castle, erected by Saxon toil. The inhabitants were accountable chiefly to the baron, in whose complete power they were; the baron was accountable only to the king. The villeins could do nothing without their lord's consent; they paid their rents by laboring upon his land whenever he called, and they were to be ever ready to do his will in case of war. They had little hope of bettering their condition; they received no education; they were punished most frightfully for the smallest infringement of the laws; they were secure in nothing. The baron and his friends, while on their hunts, galloped through and through the Saxon's grain, and he in return must refresh and entertain them without recompense when they called at his door. The Conquest put an end to real slavery in England, but it left the great majority of the English-speaking race in a condition but little removed from bondage.

Norman Traits. Since the Norman was the last important element to enter the crucible from which emerged the English personality, it will be necessary to consider carefully his characteristics and his attainments. He brought to England nothing radically new. In blood he was allied in different degrees to all the peoples of Britain. "In political ideas," says Hunt, "in culture, and in habits of social life England was in advance of her conquerors." The Normans had little originality; they adopted everywhere the institutions and the customs of

others. In England they yielded in time to their own servants, and gave up their institutions and even their language. They had no original literature, no arts, no refinement, of their own. They were religious but not moral; they founded churches everywhere and obeyed punctiliously the demands of the Church, but they knew nothing of practical morality. In marked contrast with the Saxons, they degraded woman. They condemned the English habits of gluttony and drunkenness, but after a brief period they fell into the same vices themselves. How, then, could the Normans add strength to the English character? Because they opened a permanent channel between England and the Romance world; but chiefly because, despite their failings, they furnished the best possible alloy, or rather flux, for the English character. The Norman was a blend of the North with the South, unlike either of the original elements, richer and stronger, as copper and tin blend into bronze. The Norman energy, indomitable vigor, and love of adventure, together with the Norman heaviness, coarseness, and gloom, found as its complement the Gallic culture, its brilliancy, nimble fancy, and lightness, its impulsiveness, its roseate view of life. Seldom has there been a better marriage than that between the Northman and the Gaul. It resulted in the new type whose characteristics we have discussed,—an intensely active, masterful, buoyant race, the soul of the Crusades, the dominating element in later European history. It was just the metal needed in the English crucible. It fused the whole mass into a stable unity.

The Later Kings. During the century covered by the four Norman kings feudalism in England reached its highest point. The barons strove to divide the island

into a number of vast estates, over each of which there might be an absolute ruler,—a dream which if realized would have made England a perpetual battle-ground. The sons of the Conqueror were virtually despots; they were small, mean men in comparison with their father, but they had inherited in full measure his imperious, active temperament, and this alone saved England. They curbed the barons with ruthless hand, and for a time at least they brought the crown into close contact with the English masses. The two races were brought a step nearer each other by the marriage of Henry I. to the Saxon Princess Matilda. As the years went by, more and more of the Norman nobility took English wives, and thus silently and slowly the two factions began to fuse into one people. The fierce rule of William and his sons established the unity of England. Had a feeble sovereign, like Stephen, succeeded the Conqueror, the result would have been hopeless anarchy and confusion.

William, 1066–1087.
William Rufus, –1100.
Henry, –1135.
Stephen, –1154.

The century and a half covered by the early Plantagenets is the most picturesque era in English history. It was a time of storm and change, of great men and heroic deeds. It resounds with the shouts of Crusaders and glitters with the trappings of knights and the splendors of tournaments. Over it all hangs the romantic haze of the Middle Ages, rendered yet more romantic by novelist and poet. It was a time of rapid transition. During this era the tough elements in the English cauldron fused into their final form. Gaul and Teuton blended at last into one; Anglo-Saxon and Romance hardened into English. The era was opened

Henry II., 1154-1189.
Richard I., –1199.
John, –1216.
Henry III., –1272.
Edward I., –1307.
Edward II., –1327.
Edward III., 1377.

by Henry of Anjou, the grandson of Henry I., an organiser well-nigh as great as the Conqueror. Under his strong hand the barons, who had broken over all bounds during the reign of Stephen, were curbed and conquered. He destroyed no less than eleven hundred castles, which like foul growths of the night had sprung up over all the land. He enforced without mercy, even upon churchman and noble, the full penalties of the old English law. It was the vigorous reign of Henry that gave the deathblow to English feudalism. For centuries, even until after the Wars of the Roses, the rubbish of this great ruin encumbered the land, but it was no longer a living and growing organism. The kingdom was soon bound more firmly together by the struggle that now arose between England and Anjou and that culminated during the romantic reign of Richard "the absentee," who was in every respect a foreigner. "England became a mere province of Anjou"; Norman and Saxon had a common cause, and they fought shoulder to shoulder for their common fatherland. Under John and Henry III. the struggle was renewed. All were English now, fighting against foreign favorites and the whole outside world. The Magna Charta, which was a victory for the old English liberties wrested by the combined force of Norman and Saxon from a tyrannical king, broke down the last barrier. Soon it was no longer possible to tell who was Norman and who was Saxon, for all were Englishmen.

Suggested Readings. Scott's *The Talisman* (1193); *Ivanhoe* (1194); Shakespeare's *King John* (1199–1216); Jane Porter's *Scottish Chiefs* (1297); Scott's *Castle Dangerous* (1306); *Lord of the Isles* (1307); Marlowe's *Edward II.* (1327).

CHAPTER VIII

ANGLO-NORMAN LITERATURE

Authorities. **Morley**, Vols. ii. and iii.; **Ten Brink**, Bk. i.; **Craik**, *English Literature and Language*, Vol. i.; **Saintsbury**, *Flourishing of Romance*; **Ellis**, *Early English Metrical Romances* (Bohn); **Rhys**, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend.*

The Barren Period. The old native literature which had shone so brilliantly during the Northumbrian era, which had reflected its light upon the Wessex of Ælfred, and which had flickered fitfully under the hands of Dunstan and Ælfric, went out entirely at the first shock of the Conquest. A solitary spark, the Peterborough Chronicle, smoldered sullenly on amid the waste, but even that went out in the last year of Stephen. For a century and a half the field of vernacular literature lay in darkness. This barren waste in English literary history, which covers the whole Norman period and a large part of the Angevin, is easily accounted for. At the coming of William to England, the Church of the island, which included almost the entire literary class, opposed him and thus felt the full force of his crushing policy. The writers of books disappeared; they were cut down; they became wanderers and outcasts, and in their places came Normans and Frenchmen. The Church and with it all other centers of culture passed at once into the hands of foreigners. There was no attempt to thrust upon the people the language of the conquerors, but since the Norman held court and hall and church, French became

inevitably the polite language of Britain, while the English became the tongue of the masses, of the unlettered and the poor.

The Later Chroniclers. The first-fruits of the Conquest were Latin chronicles. The Norman bishops whom William had distributed over England were scholarly men. They revived learning in the monasteries, and to some degree they awakened a new literary enthusiasm. The old Saxon passion for chronicles was revived and directed, as in Bæda's day, into Latin channels. No less than a score of these old records have come down to us. They were no longer anonymous as in the days of Wessex; the writers had more of the spirit of the modern historian. They broke away, many of them, from the dry annalistic forms of the ecclesiastical chroniclers and took broad views of their subjects. They delved, like Bæda, into contemporary documents, striving constantly for fulness and accuracy; to a large degree they divested themselves of religious prejudice; they even grasped the philosophic import of measures and periods, and they narrated their stories in a lively, interesting way. Perhaps the greatest of the group was William of Malmesbury, who wrote a history of England from 449 to 1143, a work of the utmost value to the student of this period.

Florence of Worcester, 1119.
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1128.
William of Malmesbury, 1142.
Oderic Vitalis, 1150.
Henry of Huntingdon, 1154.
Roger de Hoveden, 1202.
William of Newburgh, 1208.

(Nearly all of these chronicles, many of them with translations, may be found in Bohn's Antiquarian Library.)

The Flourishing of Romance. From the chronicle of cold fact it was but a step to the record of legend and

the whole wide province of romance. Geoffrey of Monmouth had written as real history the half-mythical tales of the Celtic Arthur and the enchanter Merlin. In the earlier days these would have rested unchanged, as did the romantic episodes in Bæda, but a new spirit was in the air. The twelfth century in Europe was electric with romance. Where originated this new spirit which for two centuries and more was to dominate European song, and who gave the final impulse, whether Scandinavian, Arabian, or Celt, is a problem for scholars. We know, however, that the new movement, whatever its parentage, was nurtured and developed by the Crusades. Men from every nation were thrown together; thousands who had never before left their native province hurried into far lands, came in contact with ancient civilizations, lived for a time in a whirl of romantic action, in the dreamy Orient. They learned to their amazement that those whom they had looked upon as barbarians possessed a culture and a civilization finer, perhaps, than their own; that the despised East had a chivalry and a religious devotion that could satisfy the highest Western ideals. They returned to Europe with a new horizon, and they told tales which to their less adventurous hearers were like the fabric of dreams. The Crusades quickened the pulse of Europe and set on fire its imagination. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Western world had almost no literature save the epic romance. It was the era of the troubadours in Provence, of the trouvères in Northern France, of the minnesingers in Germany, of the Scaldic singers in the North with their eddas and sagas. It produced the *Gesta Romanorum*, *The Nibelungenlied*, *The Romance of the Rose*, and the cycle of

Arthurian poems which has so cast its spell over later English literature. It was this warm breath from the South that stirred again to life the ruins of Engish song. But there was to be a lingering springtime. Not until there came a second impulse from over the sea in Chaucer's day did the field burst into bloom.

Malory's Morte d'Arthur.
Tennyson's Idyls of the King.
Arnold's Tristram and Iseult.
Morris' Defense of Guinevere.
Quinet's Merlin.
Swinburne's Arthurian Poems.

The Legend of Arthur. The new literature had come early to England. In court and hall during all the Norman era trouvères and jongleurs had sung in French the romances of Roland and of Charlemagne. Doubtless many of the *Chansons de Geste* were made by Norman singers on English soil. But the movement was not national; it came late to the people, and the medium through which it came at last was the legend of Arthur. The romantic history of Geoffrey of Monmouth in 1155 was turned into old French verse by the Norman Wace, and thus it passed at once into the current of romance. The Charlemagne cycle was fast losing its charm, and the Arthurian legend, caught up by Breton minstrels, at once replaced it. During the reign of Henry II. the legend was entirely reorganized, perhaps by WALTER MAP (b. 1137), a French-speaking native of the Welsh border and a prominent member of the King's court. The new poet,—and he must rank with the greatest literary creators of all time,—threw over the Arthur story the twilight glow, the religious fervor of the Crusade era. He added the episode of the Holy Grail, and so transformed the entire legend that he may almost be said to have created it. He molded it into a unity and gave it a spiritual purpose. The cycle has been changed

only in minor details since it left the hand of this great master.

The Renaissance of the Vernacular. It is a significant fact that the first important poem in English written after the Conquest, or indeed after the days of Dunstan, was inspired by a Norman-French version of the Arthur legend. Wace had turned the Latin work of an English monk into French epic verse for the amusement of those who spoke no English, and now Layamon, another native monk, was to complete the circle by translating Wace into English, that those who spoke no French might share the enjoyment of the new literature heretofore confined to court and hall. The *Brut* of Layamon is almost purely Saxon in its diction, and prevailingly Saxon in its metrical arrangement, but it nevertheless shows most clearly the workings of the new leaven that for a century and more had been permeating England. That the poet left out almost entirely the vigorous verse-ring, the poetic compounds, the fire and thrill of the old gleemen, may perhaps be explained by the fact that he was an inferior singer. But despite its Saxon garb the poem is Norman in its turn of expression, its frequent rhymes, its intellectual horizon, and its view of life. The Anglo-Saxon harp, though uncaptured by the conquerors, was being retuned to the Norman pitch. That this was true is shown by the popularity of the *Brut* and its immediate successors in the same field. Great numbers of English poems rapidly followed, all of them imitated or translated from the Norman-French, like *The Owl and the Nightingale*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Floris and Blanchefleur*, and many others. Beginning about 1250, they continued for nearly a century to be

the most voluminous and popular productions of the period.

But the new inspiration for which the Anglo-Saxon literature had so long waited came when the people and the language were powerless to produce a new school of original writers. England, although a political unity, was a confusion of tongues. The French was yielding to English as a spoken language, but the English was in an unstable condition. During the century and a half in which it had been a vulgar tongue, unwritten and unfashionable, it had become corrupted and changed. It had lost its inflections and modified its constructions. When once the two races had begun to unite, the change had been very rapid. The French began to "pour into English," says Marsh, "the greatest infusion of foreign words and foreign idioms which any European tongue ever received from a foreign source." Besides this there were three widely different dialects of English, and it was uncertain as yet which was to win. A distinctly national literature was impossible in such a language; and even were it possible, the people were not yet sufficiently welded into a unity to bring about such a consummation. It was not until the days of Edward III. that the English nation awoke to the realization of fatherland and to the consciousness of a glorious future, which for the first time made a really national literature possible.

In the meantime all literary effort was sporadic, but the product was more and more in the English tongue. In the Midland dialect, in addition to the *Brut*, was written the *Ormulum*, a series of metrical homilies, which, although exceedingly valuable to the philologist, are

almost destitute of literary value; in the Southern dialect we have the rhyming Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, and *The Ancren Riwle*, or Rules for Nuns; and the North has preserved for us such writings as the *Cursor Mundi* and *The Prick of Conscience*. These works only emphasize the fact of the utter barrenness of the era from the Conquest to Edward III. From a merely literary standpoint not a single work was produced of the first or even of the second rank. It was a period of preparation, of transition; it built up a language and molded a people, but left behind it no finished art. The creation of the Arthurian legend opened a vast quarry from which succeeding poets have drawn materials for imposing structures, but the era produced no masterwork. It furnished tools and raw material and inspiration for later workers, but it was powerless to do more.

(See Morris' *Specimens of Early English*, Part i., 1150–1300.)

The Rise of Universities. The Crusades not only stirred the imagination of Europe and enlarged its horizon, but, by revealing the treasures of Oriental scholarship, they gave a new impulse to Western education. They, more than any other influence, caused the rapid rise of universities in the twelfth century. By the end of the century the universities of Paris, Bologna, and Salerno were preëminent, and it was through Paris that the new impulse entered England. During the Norman era, when Britain and France were in close contact, the wealthy classes had sent their sons across the Channel for the education that the island could not furnish them. The stream grew ever greater, until in the days of Henry II. thousands of English learners sat at the feet of Abelard

and other masters who gathered at the University of Paris. The return of these scholars did much to stimulate English learning. Oxford and Cambridge, old centers of monastic training, burst into vigor as universities, and by the opening of the fourteenth century took rank even with Paris and Salerno.

The university movement, however, which promised for a time to produce a new intellectual era, accomplished little. It was but a rattling of dry bones. There could be no intellectual advancement where the student must never leave the circular rut worn by ages of scholastic feet. Originality was heresy. With literature in the vernacular the schools could have no sympathy. The great intellectual and literary movement of Chaucer's day got from them discouragement rather than help; indeed, when we inquire into the causes for the quick decline of this most brilliant era, and the long succeeding era of darkness, we find the universities a prominent factor.

And yet this great scholastic movement cannot be overlooked. It produced the ferment from which grew the Reformation, and it produced also the most commanding intellectual figure of the era,—Roger Bacon, who stands at the portals of modern science. But Bacon's great Latin work, "at once the encyclopædia and the *Novum Organum* of the thirteenth century," need not be discussed here, since it belongs not to literature but to pure science.

TABLE III.—LITERATURE OF THE NORMAN PERIOD, 1066–1350

LATIN AND FRENCH.	ENGLISH.	TRANSLATIONS OF FRENCH ROMANCES, 1250–1350.
LATIN CHRONICLES. 1119. Florence of Worcester. 1128. Geoffrey of Monmouth. 1142. William of Malmesbury. 1150. Oderic Vitalis. 1154. Henry of Huntingdon. 1202. Roger de Hoveden. 1208. William of Newburgh, and others. ANGLO-NORMAN ROMANCE. Walter Map (d. 1210). *De Nugis Curialium* (Court Gossip in Latin). *Goldias.* *Lancelot du Lac.* *Queste de St. Graal.* *Mort Artus.* Various Romances of Arthur. The story of Arthur in the Latin Chronicle of Geoffrey of Monmouth was expanded and turned into French by the Norman Wace, whose work in turn was translated into English by Layamon. Map added other episodes to the romance.	NORTHERN. *Cursor Mundi.* *The Prick of Conscience.* MIDLAND. *Chronicle*, 1123–1131. *Chronicle*, 1154. *Ormulum*, 1200. *Genesis* and *Exodus*, 1230–1250. *Harrowing of Hell*, c. 1350. (Earliest English drama). *Robert of Brunne.* SOUTHERN. *Cotton Homilies*, 1150. *Hatton Gospels*, 1170. Layamon's *Brut*, 1203. *Ancren Riwle*, 1220 (?). Robert of Gloucester, 1300. *Ayenbite*, 1340.	Nicholas of Guildford's *The Owl and the Nightingale.* *Song of Horn.* *Havelok the Dane*, 1270–1280. *Guy of Warwick.* *Floris and Blanchefleur.* *King Alexander.* *Richard Cœur de Lion.* *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, c. 1360. *Geste Historyal of the Destruction of Troy*, 1360, and many others.

CHAPTER IX

THE AGE OF CHAUCER (I)

1350–1400

I. Chaucer's England

Authorities. **Browne's** *Chaucer's England*, which unfortunately is now out of print, is of great value to the student of the era, as is also **Jusserand,** *Piers Plowman.* **Green,** *Shorter History;* **Warburton,** *Edward III.* and **Gairdner,** *Houses of Lancaster and York* in the Epoch Series; **Morley,** *English Writers*, Vols. iii. and iv.; **Ten Brink,** Vols. i. and ii.; **Marsh,** *English Language;* **Craik,** *English Literature and Language;* and **Morris** and **Skeat,** *Specimens*, Part ii., 1298–1393, are invaluable aids. For a more complete bibliography, see **Skeat,** *Piers the Plowman*, Clarendon Press Ed., p. xlviii., and **Welsh,** *English Masterpiece Course.*

Union. In 1350 the people of England could look back to the days of William the Conqueror over a stretch of nearly three centuries,—as long a period as from the present back to the days of Elizabeth, ere a single English home existed in the new world. The passions and the problems of that early day had faded into story and legend; the distinction between Norman and Saxon had long ago been forgotten, but despite all this the English were not yet a perfectly homogeneous people. There had been two well-nigh insurmountable obstacles in the way of complete union. During a large part of the era the kingdom had embraced a goodly section of continental

Europe, and under such conditions a united nationality was impossible. Nature herself had placed the barrier to such a union. Cæsar and Swein had struggled against it in vain, and the successors of William were to succeed no better. England must work out her problem alone or not at all. John's fortunate loss of the French province removed at last this great obstacle, but it left still another difficulty in the way of union,—the obstinate conservatism of the English masses. A sober, industrious, uneducated peasantry is ever a slow-moving body; add the adjective "English" and you increase the inertia tenfold. The final fusion of the two peoples was doubtless inevitable, but it proved to be an almost interminable process. The English yielded not at all; almost every concession came from the ruling class. They made the first move; they went half way and more; they gave up indeed nearly everything that was essentially their own. Only when the change was well-nigh complete did the Saxons relent. Then for a time there was a period of breaking and building such as no other European language has ever experienced. But the changes were largely external. The English language is to-day in foundation and framework strictly Anglo-Saxon, and the institutions and laws of the land are fundamentally Teutonic—facts which testify most eloquently to the strength and tenacity of the Saxon race.

The final union of the English people and the shaping of their language into its ultimate form took place during the reign of Edward III. So sharply defined was this consummation that it can be definitely located within the limits of one generation.

A Literary Outburst. During the thirty-two years be-

tween 1362 and 1393 there were produced in England Langland's *Piers the Plowman*, that earliest voice from the downtrodden masses; Wyclif's great Bible, the first complete translation of the Book into any Teutonic tongue; Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and almost the entire works of Geoffrey Chaucer, who ranks as one of the great poets of the race. Back of this opening date lies a dreary mass of ecclesiastical babblings and an interminable drone of metrical romance after French models. The French critic Jusserand has admirably characterized this poetry:

1362. Langland's Piers the Plowman. "A" Text.
1366. Chaucer's Romaunt of the Rose.
1370-1378. Wyclif's Bible.
c. 1387. The Canterbury Tales.
1393. Gower's Confessio Amantis.
c. 1400. The Voiage and Travaile of Mandeville.

> The poet sleeps and his slumber is peopled by dreams. He dreams *de omni re scibili*, and it takes his whole existence to tell all he has seen; nay one lifetime does not always suffice; he dies, having been unable to write more than five thousand verses, and another poet must come and sleep in his stead, in order to finish in eighteen thousand lines the dream commenced forty years before. This happened to Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Mean, authors of the *Roman de la Rose*.

That this drowsy, chaotic field of dreams should suddenly burst into full life and bloom, produce new forms of beauty of wonderful variety and of lasting fragrance, seems little short of miraculous. Why this sudden outburst? Why should the old field of English song, which had been lifeless for centuries, which had been stirred to a pale, somnolent florescence by the new breath of the South, have turned in a moment from death to life, from barrenness to almost tropic profusion? Why, in the short space of a generation, should a group of masters have appeared who could bring order out of a Babel of tongues, who could lay the foundations of English prose,

and give the final pitch to English song? And why, furthermore, after this short season of profusion should the field have lapsed again into barrenness to lie for a century and a half with naught but the dream of this hour of beauty? This is the problem that faces the student of the beginnings of English literature. It can be answered only in part. It is the same problem that rises before the student of the golden age of Grecian art, that will confront us again during the days of Elizabeth.

The Spirit of the Age. The reign of Edward III. was like a Northern April, full of swift changes; running quickly to extremes; boisterous, now with merriment, now with rage; ending at last in cold and storm, yet full of the promise of a glorious June. Ever since the days of King John there had been growing in English hearts a new sense of freedom. The fetters which during the long winter of the Middle Ages had compelled the masses to endure without hope of redress every form of despotic rule, were beginning to give way. The king no longer had absolute power. John had been weakened and humbled and his successors had been held in check. Suddenly it was realized that the people were the supreme power in the state, that they could even push a bad king, like Edward II., from the throne. The Parliament was gaining constantly in authority; the people were thrilling more and more with a sense of power.

But it was a stormy era. England was full of fierce barons eager for desperate adventure. There could be no peace in Britain until this last vestige of feudalism had been destroyed. The Scottish wars had for a time given vent to their fierce passions; but the victory won by Edward III. had exhausted this field for glory. Un-

doubtedly they would have fallen fiercely upon each other in civil strife had not Edward provoked a war with France which sent them shoulder to shoulder to fight for England.

The war was maintained on a vast scale. The great armies led by knights were recruited from the English yeomanry, and after the splendid victories of Crécy and Poitiers, won almost entirely by the English archers, a mighty thrill of pride shook all England. The shout that arose from every quarter of the land was in the English tongue and warm from English hearts. It shook England into such a union as she had never before known. Before this era English history had been provincial; henceforth it was to be national.

1329. Death of Bruce.
1333. Edward Defeats the Scots.
1338. Edward Claims French Crown.
1340. Naval Victory off Sluys.
1346. Battle of Crécy.
1348, 1361, 1369. The Black Death.
1356. Battle of Poitiers.
1376. Death of Black Prince.
1377. Death of Edward III.
1377. Accession o. Richard II.
1381. Wat Tyler's Revolt.
1399. Deposition of Richard.

But military enthusiasm alone cannot account for the new life that was pulsing in English veins. It was in every realm of activity an era of enlargement. Commerce had begun to flourish, London was growing enormously in wealth, England had won her first great naval battle since Ælfred's day and was waking to a realization of wherein her strength was to lie; her ships already covered the seas and English sailors thronged every foreign port. This in itself brought an enlarged horizon. The reading public turned eagerly to the travels of Mandeville, the first secular English book to gain a wide reading. The new spirit was penetrating even to the lowest ranks of the people. A murmur from the masses increasing ever in volume began to rise until it filled the land.

Chivalry. It was the high noon of English chivalry, that solitary blossom of the feudal system. At first it had promised unmixed good. It had tended to tame and soften the brutal warrior, to make him unselfish and thoughtful of others, but it had rapidly degenerated into pageantry and ostentation. As one reads the thrilling pages of Froissart, which chronicle the brave deeds of Edward's reign, as one witnesses the crash of knights, the glitter and stir of tournaments, the gallant deeds, the reckless heroism, and the magnificent victories, one cannot but glow with enthusiasm. Yet chivalry had little in it save its poetry. It was all on the surface; it was but a cloak for grasping ambition. It widened the gulf between the high and the low; it had no sympathy with the poor,—it sacrificed them and tortured them to maintain its glory. One incident alone, that of the French knights at Crécy who rode over and cut down their own foot-soldiers in order the more quickly to reach their foes and display their valor, is enough to show the emptiness and the selfishness of the system. It was supported by taxes that fell ultimately upon the shoulders of the peasantry. Such outrage could not long be borne in silence. The Black Death, which first visited England in 1348, precipitated the storm. This awful visitation, which swept away more than one half the inhabitants of the island, came with especial severity upon the laboring classes. It upset the industrial system. Laborers could not be found to carry on the estates, and wages rose enormously. Thereupon a law was passed which bound the peasantry to their lords' estates. It became impossible for the working class to benefit by the new demand for labor, and it was this last straw that set all England

into the peasant revolt under Tyler and Ball. The peasants were defeated, yet in the end they gained all they asked.

The Spirit of Reform was not confined to industrial and social circles alone. The Church was being stirred as well. It had become sadly corrupt. Both Langland and Chaucer agree in their descriptions of wanton friars, dishonest pardoners, and unholy priests. Earnest reformers like Wyclif were speaking boldly against these abuses and arousing the people to think for themselves.

Thus was the era one of intense activity. The people were awakening from the long sleep of the Middle Ages and were stirring the social, the intellectual, the moral life of England to its very bottom. It was the prelude to the greater renaissance that was to commence a century later, and that was to shake the last fetters from the human mind.

SUGGESTED READING. Lanier, *Boy's Froissart;* William Ainsworth, *Merrie England;* Conan Doyle, *The White Company;* Shakespeare, *Richard II.;* Southey, *Wat Tyler.*

The New Language. We have already noted that when once the Anglo-Saxon tongue had begun to yield at all, it gave way with great rapidity. "Between 1300 and 1350," says Marsh, "as many Latin and French words were introduced into the English language as in the whole period of more than two centuries which had elapsed between the Conquest and the beginning of the fourteenth century." When Mandeville wrote in 1356, English was in use everywhere as the spoken tongue, but it had been used very little as a literary medium. That he viewed it with suspicion is proved by the fact that he

wrote his great work first in Latin, then in French, and last of all in English. Langland and Chaucer, of all the prominent writers of the era, alone confined themselves to the vernacular, but Langland, since he wrote for the masses, had no alternative. That Chaucer, a child of the court, educated and cultured, cosmopolitan in his life, and withal a genius of the very first rank, should have chosen a rapidly shifting medium of expression, seems at first inexplicable, but that he did thus confine himself to the English tongue is wonderfully significant. Until Chaucer wrote there was no standard for English; there were no models, there were no masters. It is hard to realize to-day in how chaotic a condition the language really was. It needed a master to fix its changing forms, to sanction its new usages, and to preserve its strong old words. Fortunately the master was at hand. "From this Babylonish confusion of speech," says Marsh, "the influence and example of Chaucer did more to rescue his native tongue than any other single cause." But he did more than give mere form to the language. He breathed into it the breath of life.

It is true [says Lowell] that a language, as respects the uses of literature, is liable to a kind of syncope. No matter how complete its vocabulary may be, how thorough an outfit of inflections and case-endings it may have, it is a mere dead body without a soul until some man of genius sets its arrested pulses once more athrob, and shows what wealth of sweetness, scorn, persuasion, and passion lay there awaiting its liberation. In this sense it is hardly too much to say that Chaucer, like Dante, found his native tongue a dialect, and left it a language.

That the form of English spoken in the East Midland region should have become the language of England was almost inevitable. It was the tongue of London, the center of government, wealth, and culture. It was

spoken in the central province, the heart of England—dialects survive longest in the distant corners. It was situated geographically between the two other chiet dialects. Peasants of Devonshire and of Yorkshire could scarce understand each other, yet both could understand the man from the Midlands. The great universities were in the middle province, and, furthermore, all the great writers of Chaucer's era produced their works in the Midland vernacular, thus making it the literary tongue.

The literary product of the period falls into two divisions: the poetry of Langland, Gower, and Chaucer, and the prose of Mandeville and Wyclif.

II. Poetry

At the portal of modern English song stands a quaint figure, one of those marked characters found only in transition eras, looking fondly into the past and hesitatingly into the present and the future; clinging to the ancient forms yet using freely of the new;—a voice from the masses which embodied the English past, yet a voice full of the present and ringing with the prophecy of the new era. While all around him were repeating the strains of French romance Langland clung to the Anglo-Saxon harp, silent since the days of the singers of Maldon and Brunanburh, and from its ancient strings he struck the first notes of modern popular song.

1. William Langland (c. 1332–c. 1400)

Authorities. **Jusserand**, *Piers Plowman;* **Skeat**, *Piers the Plowman*, Clarendon Press Ed.; **Scudder**, *Social Ideals in English Letters.*

The facts concerning Langland's life must be gathered

from the lines of his masterwork. The most widely popular poet of his time, he nevertheless, so far as we know, provoked not a single contemporary mention. From scattered autobiographical fragments of his poem we construct a vague picture of the author: a tall, gaunt man—" Long Will "—with the tonsure and the bearing of a minor ecclesiastic; abstracted, taciturn, striding down London streets without a word or a nod to the gay nobles and gallants, yet noting with fierce heart all of their vanities; a man from the people, who knew the homes and the life of the poor, who recognized what few of his day even dreamed, " that a man 's a man for a' that," —a mediæval Burns; picking up the few pence required for his simple needs by singing at the funerals of the rich and by writing in the courts of law; a man with open eyes, who saw more clearly than any other of his time the condition of his age.

To his masterpiece, *The Vision Concerning Piers the Plowman*, Langland gave his entire life. He revised it and added to it from year to year. He poured into it, as did our own Whitman into *Leaves of Grass*, the observations, the reflections, the philosophy, the dreams of his best years. It is a biography of the heart-life of its author and his times. As a work of art it is extremely faulty: it is mystical and vague, it has little coherence, it is as uncouth as the people for whom it was written. It tells no well-rounded story as do Chaucer's tales; it is a series of chaotic pictures, glimpses of rugged fields through openings in the mist.

The poem opens, as do the *Canterbury Tales*, with a prologue which presents to us every class of English society:

> Barons, burgesses, and bond-men also,
> I saw in this assembly, as ye shall hereafter,
> Bakers and brewers and butchers many,
> Woolen Websters and weavers of linen,
> Tailors and tinkers and toilers in markets,
> Masons and miners and many other crafts.

He shows us the monk, the friar, the parson, the poor priest, the pardoner, just as we see them in Chaucer's procession. But it is not Langland's method to point at particular figures. He deals with society, Chaucer with the individual; he shows the forest, Chaucer the tree. His characters become mere symbols with which to work his problems, and his poem is an allegory, more and more mystical. The field of folks sets out to find Truth. A palmer, who knows the shrines of all saints, becomes the guide, but he leads them astray. Piers, a plowman, is found, who discloses the falseness of clerical leaders, and points out the true way himself. This, then, is the moral: the people seek truth; the Church has become a blind guide; guidance must come from the people themselves. To get the lessons of the poem one must read between the lines; every page is bitter with satire, but it is veiled and ambiguous. To those, however, who most needed the lesson it was plainly in evidence. It was not safe in Langland's day to speak too clearly. He gives the picture; you must interpret. He tells the fable of the mice who would bell the cat, but he drives no moral home; his reader must guess it. "Divine ye," cries the author, "for I ne dare."

The poem is a voice of protest, a cry from the poor. Its pathetic pictures of oppressed poverty even now stir the feelings. Its influence upon the peasants was great; it was an incentive to the great revolt that finally liberated

the working class. It is not to be wondered at that it became the book of the masses, that upwards of forty manuscripts of it survive, all of them unilluminated and plain. It was an English poem from an English pen, the first significant native note since the Conquest.

REQUIRED READING. The Prologue to *Piers Plowman*, Morris' Ed. See also Baldwin, *Famous Allegories*.

2. *John Gower (c. 1330–1408)*

The moral Gower.—*Chaucer*.

To turn from this apostle of the poor to Gower, the court poet of the period, is to go from the squalid hut into the brilliant hall. As we read the pages of Langland we see England from the standpoint of the plowman, —from that of the life all toil, the life bowed down by the burden of centuries of hopeless oppression. When we turn to Gower's *Vox Clamantis* we see the same England from the standpoint of the aristocrat. To him the bitter cry of the poor beneath their heavy burden was but the hee-aw of a herd of asses that had refused to carry their rightful burdens, and that were rushing about, terrifying honest people, and demanding to be lodged and curried like horses. The maddened and desperate throng under Wat Tyler was to Gower a herd of unclean swine possessed by the devil, and their leader was a furious wild boar. They should be hunted down and rings put into their noses. He has not a word of pity; these turbulent masses belong to an utterly different world; he will be in perfect sympathy with the torturing and maiming and murdering of the thousands of wretched victims after the revolt has failed.

In all this, however, Gower was sincere and honest.

He realized that something was radically wrong in the state, and he set forth courageously to find the evil. He meant the *Vox Clamantis* to be the voice of one crying in the social wilderness, "Make straight the ways of the Lord." He divided society into its three classes, represented by the clergy, the soldiers, and the plowmen, and he carefully studied each of them. He found the root of the evil in the corruptions of the Church, and he assailed it as fearlessly as did Langland. His search for evils reveals to us the actual conditions of England in a most realistic way; there is no better preparation for the *Canterbury Tales* than a reading of *Piers Plowman* and *Vox Clamantis*.

The works of Gower afford a striking illustration of the linguistic conditions of his time. His amatory ballads, his roundels *à la mode*, and his long philosophic poem, *Speculum Meditantis*, now lost, were written in French, and his *Vox Clamantis*, which was meant to be his masterwork, was written in Latin, the only language then considered permanent. In his old age, however, influenced by the great success of Chaucer, he lapsed into English, and amused the idle court with the interminable drone of the *Confessio Amantis*.

Gower invented nothing and he ornamented little that he borrowed; yet he was the fashionable singer of his generation. His influence upon later writers is inappreciable. His poems have but little value; they are well-nigh unreadable to-day. The *Vox Clamantis* is a valuable document in the history of the English people, but it has little merit as a literary work. Over the grave of Gower at St. Saviour's, Southwark, rests a marble figure of the poet, his head upon three books of stone, symbolic perhaps of the heaviness of the author's three masterpieces.

CHAPTER X

THE AGE OF CHAUCER (II)

3. Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400)

The last of the trouvères.—*Minto.*

Authorities. **Skeat's** *Works of Chaucer* in six volumes is the most scholarly and complete edition of the poet; the Aldine is an excellent working edition; the Globe is the best single-volume edition. The best edition of the "Prologue" and the "Knight's Tale" is **Morris'**, Clarendon Press Series. The most helpful works on the general subject of Chaucer are **Pollard,** *Chaucer*, Literature Primer Series; **Browne,** *Chaucer's England;* **Ten Brink,** Vol. ii., Part i.; and **Lounsbury,** *Studies in Chaucer*, 3 vols., an excellent work for reference. The most helpful Life of Chaucer is **Ward's** in the English Men of Letters Series; that by **Nicolas** prefixed to the Aldine edition of the poet's works is of great value. For a bibliography of Chaucer authorities, see **Welsh,** *English Masterpiece Course.*

The wave of romantic song that had started during the ninth century among the troubadours of Provence, that had rolled northward awakening the trouvères, that had crossed the Channel and had swept over the ancient Saxon landmarks, was in the twelfth century spending its ebbing energies in an interminable welter of feeble imitation. Then arose, as so often happens at the close of periods of decadence, a master who rescued all that was best from the wreckage, who bound it into a unity, who added new elements gathered from wide fields, who

poured over it the light of creative genius until the entire mass was transfigured, and who gave to it an impetus that made it the dominating power of the new era. Thus stands Chaucer, like Langland, on the border,—the last of the old, the first of the new. Langland the last of the scops, the first of the popular poets; Chaucer the last of the trouvères, the father of modern epic song.

His Life. The biography of Chaucer, when stripped of all tradition and conjecture, reduces to a mass of dates and fragmentary entries in the legal and official documents of his time. In a legal paper dated 1380, he describes himself as the son of John Chaucer, vintner, of London. Another document establishes the fact that in 1310 Chaucer's grandfather had been a collector of the port of London. In 1386 the poet, as a witness in a court trial, describes himself as " of the age of forty years and more, having borne arms for twenty-seven years."

The first authentic allusion to Chaucer is dated 1357, when he is mentioned as a member of the household of Prince Lionel, the third son of Edward III. In 1360 the king paid sixteen pounds to France for his ransom as a prisoner of war. Seven years later he was granted a pension for services rendered and to be rendered, and this was continued in various forms until his death. The pension rolls contain constant records of the drawing of this pension, specifying in each case whether it was drawn by his own hand or by deputy, a seemingly trivial fact that has upset many a tradition concerning the poet's wanderings. From 1370 to 1380 Chaucer was sent by the Crown on no less than six important missions to the continent, three of them to Italy. The best known of these is that of 1372, when he negotiated a commercial

treaty with Genoa, and remained abroad nearly a year. From 1374 to 1386 he was controller of the customs of the port of London, and the deed is still extant describing the Corporation house at Aldgate which he occupied during this time. In 1386 he was elected to Parliament; in 1389 he was made clerk of the King's works at the palace at Westminster, and he held several other minor government offices during the last years of his life. He died February 5, 1400.

This, then, in connection with several autobiographical allusions in his poems, is all that we know of Chaucer's life. But these few fragmentary facts are infinitely suggestive. They furnish a biography of the poet that is more satisfactory and complete than is that of Shakespeare, who lived two centuries nearer our day. They show us a man educated in a most brilliant court and moving in the highest society during all his life; a soldier in a stirring and eventful age; a diplomat of rare powers; a man with administrative talents, sagacious in business transactions; a man of the world who had traveled widely and who knew all of his generation worth knowing; and withal a most lovable personality, upon whom honors and gifts were showered during all his life. And all this in addition to his poetical skill, which is never once alluded to in the documents. Had it not been for his connection with public life we should know little more of Chaucer than we do of Langland.

His Early Writings. The court of Edward III., in which Chaucer was reared and educated, was the most brilliant in Europe. It was Parisian in its pomp and gayety. It resounded with the sensuous French minstrelsy; troubadours and trouvères were constantly in the

service of the King. Love was the ruling theme; amorous lays, especially that most popular of mediæval epics, the *Romaunt of the Rose*, were the delight of the court; life was a perpetual May-day.

Amid such surroundings did the young Chaucer learn the poetic art. He served, we know, the full apprenticeship of a trouvère. In his youth, according to Gower, he filled all the land for Venus' sake with ditties and glad songs; and according to Lydgate he made

> Full many a fresh ditty,
> Complantes, ballades, roundels, virelays.

But of this early work, made up of "many a song and many a lecherous lay," not a trace remains.

It may have been in French *à la mode*, but it is more probable that like all the extant writings of the poet it was in the English tongue. The reasons for Chaucer's selection of the vernacular when all about him were writing in French are hard to find. It may be that on account of his humble birth he had not sufficient command of the French for poetic use, and that he refused to make, like Gower, bad French verses when he could use English with ease; it may be that like all other true poets he was conscious of his power and sang in his own tongue because he must; or it may be that the court, which was leaning more and more toward the vernacular, delighted even in the day of Chaucer's youth to hear one English voice amid the French chorus. At best we can only conjecture.

The Romaunt of the Rose.
The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse.
The Compleynte unto Pite.
Chaucer's A B C.

But the early work of Chaucer is English only in externals. Like a true courtier of the era, he was fascinated

by the *Romance of the Rose*, so much so that he must needs translate it, and later, when as court poet he would write a melancholy epic on the death of Blaunche, the young wife of John of Gaunt, it was the machinery and the spirit of this poem that furnished inspiration. Until his first journey to Italy, when in his thirty-second year, Chaucer was an English trouvère.

The Period of Italian Influence. In 1372, when the young poet visited Genoa and Florence as the representative of King Edward, all Italy was thrilling with a new intellectual life. Dante, with a genius unknown since classic times, had cast aside the mist that had so dimmed the horizon of the Middle Ages, and had shown the possibilities of a broader and richer intellectual life. Now, a half-century later, Petrarch, a lyrist like those of Grecian days, was pouring out a wealth of song that was to furnish Europe with models for centuries to come, and Boccaccio, half poet, half romancer, was making the standard for Italian prose. It was this "great Etruscan three" that set in motion the Early Italian Renaissance, the first wave of that greater renaissance which two centuries later was to sweep all Europe from its ancient moorings.

Dante, 1265–1321.
Petrarch, 1304–1375.
Boccaccio, 1313–1375.

The effect of Chaucer's three visits to the radiating centers of the new intellectual movement upon his later life and work is not at first sight apparent. It furnished him with fresh raw materials for his tales, but it did not change the fundamentals of his art. He had been too long in the school of the trouvères to change his instrument or his method. But the Italian influence

The Compleynte of Mars.
A Compleynte to his Lady.
Anelida and Arcite (Germ of the Knighte's Tale).
The Parlament of Foules.
Boëce.
Troilus and Criseyde.

served to balance and to broaden the poet. It gave him a new ideal of literary art. It increased greatly the number of his literary models, it opened to him a new world of art. Without it the *Legende of Good Women* and the *Canterbury Tales* might have been but brilliant variations of the *Romaunt of the Rose*.

The works of this second period need not be dwelt upon, so completely are they shadowed by the poet's masterpiece, the *Canterbury Tales*. The most charming of them all is the *Parlament of Foules*, a poem full of the breath and joy of the springtime which it celebrates.

The Last Period in Chaucer's literary life was opened by the appearance of that splendid allegory, the *Hous of Fame*. The poet had at last mastered his instrument; he now realized fully the extent and the nature of his powers, and accordingly he set out deliberately to make a poem that should be the crowning work of his life. It was no " middle flight " that he now attempted. So exacting were his ideals that he left all of the poetry of this period unfinished at his death. The *Hous of Fame* was to be an epic to do for the English what Dante had done for the Italian; but he left it a splendid torso to execute the command of the Queen to make a poem celebrating the constancy and the heroism of woman. The work was to be almost of the nature of a penance, for Chaucer in many of his poems had sadly offended the ladies of the court by his frequent reflections upon the inconstancy of their sex. The *Legende of Good Women* was a noble atonement. Its description of the springtime and the poet's wanderings in the meadows to be near his favorite flower, the daisy; his

The Hous of Fame.
The Legende of Good Women.
Treatise on the Astrolabe.
The Canterbury Tales.

meeting with the queen of love, who upbraids him for his cruel poems and commands him to write

> Of goode wymmen, maydenes and wyves
> That weren trew in lovyng al hire lyves;

and finally his artless tales of Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, and other heroines who had been constant even unto death,—combine to make one of the finest poems in Chaucer's collection. But the penance was never completed. There were to be twenty legends, and the poet finished only nine. The theme of the *Canterbury Tales* had taken possession of him, and despite the Queen's commission, he dropped the poem, of which he was beginning to tire, to plunge with enthusiasm into what was to be his masterwork.

The Canterbury Tales. (**Skeat,** Vols. iv., v.; **Saunders,** *Canterbury Tales.*) So completely have the *Canterbury Tales* become synonymous with Chaucer that the majority of readers forget that he ever wrote anything else. The perfect naturalness of the Prologue, its simplicity and grace, its fidelity to nature, as if it had flowed spontaneously like the songs of wild birds, lead one to enjoy it as he does the springtime flowers, without a question as to its evolution. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the work was the crowning effort of a long life whose leisure hours had been devoted wholly to art. Through all the poet's earlier work there may be traced a growing steadiness of hand, an enlarging conception of literary art, an increasing self-confidence. In the *Legende of Good Women* he attempted for the first time to define character and to individualize his creations; in the Prologue he threw away all models and drew no longer from the cast

but from nature herself. His whole life had been a preparation for the work. The thread of prologue, when once it was found, could bind together things both new and old. The collection contains poems from every period of Chaucer's career. Some of his early work, like the tale told by the second nun, was inserted without change; other early creations, like *The Knighte's Tale*, were carefully remodeled.

The plan of the work is very simple. On an April evening there gathers by chance at the Tabard Inn, on the outskirts of London, a motley company of twenty-nine persons, all intending to start in the morning on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury,

> That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

For mutual safety they agree to journey together, and at the suggestion of the host, who volunteers to accompany them, they plan that each of them shall tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the return journey;

> For trewely, confort ne mirthe is noon
> To ryde by the weye doumb as a stoon.

The host is to act as interlocutor and judge, and upon their return to the Tabard the one who has told the best tale is to be given a supper at the common cost.

This plan gave great freedom to the poet; he could extend the series indefinitely and stop at will, and he could bring in any style of composition that his fancy might dictate. As a matter of fact, but twenty-four out of the projected one hundred and twenty-eight tales are

recorded by Chaucer, and on his pages the jolly company never reaches Canterbury at all, nor enjoys the final feast at the Tabard. But the work is nevertheless a unity and one of the glories of the English language.

It is the first time in English poetry [says Green] that we are brought face to face not with characters or allegories or reminiscences of the past, but with living and breathing men, men distinct in temper and sentiment as in face or costume or mode of speech; and with this distinctness of each maintained throughout the story by a thousand shades of expression and action. It is the first time, too, that we meet with the dramatic power which not only creates each character, but combines it with its fellows, which not only adjusts each tale or jest to the temper of the person who utters it, but fuses all into a poetic unity.

It is a truly representative band that travels from London to Canterbury. All England is in it,—every class of society from the noble knight, the hero of fifteen mortal battles, to the poor plowman and the vulgar miller. Should all the histories of England be lost one could reconstruct from Chaucer's pages a living picture of the social life of Edward's times and the spirit of his age. Some things would be wanting: there is little in the poems concerning the martial glories of the era, or of the miseries of the masses; the Black Death is never mentioned, nor is there a word concerning the peasant revolt, for Chaucer was a court poet intent upon amusing a gentle audience,—but otherwise the picture is complete.

His Personality and Literary Style. (**Lowell**, *Essay on Chaucer;* **Minto**, *Characteristics of English Poets;* **Taine**, *English Literature.*) Few poets of any era have left in their works a more pleasing picture of their own personality than has Chaucer. As we read there comes to us the figure of a jovial, hearty man, intensely human, teeming with life and enthusiasm, wholesome and sane as

nature herself. He is the poet of youth, of love, of the springtime. From every page there breathe the odors of May meadows, and gush the songs of the throstle and the lark. How charming the picture of the poet in the *Legende of Good Women*, hastening into the fields and kneeling to the daisy:

> And doun on knes anon-ryght I me sette,
> And as I koude, this fresshe flour I grette,
> Knelyng alwey, til it unclosėd was,
> Upon the smalé, softé, swoté grass.

The perfect naturalness and simplicity of the man is a continual charm. In his poems there is not a trace of the drone and the artificiality of Gower. We follow him on and on without a thought of weariness. He is "the greatest story-teller of the English language," for he wastes not a word; his lines have the rare charm of inevitableness,—we cannot conceive how they could have cost their maker a single struggle; he carries us at will, seemingly without effort, and he has the rare power of giving life to his characters. As we think of the monk, the pardoner, the wife of Bath, the miller, they seem like people that we have actually known. They stand almost in the flesh before us, intensely English, overflowing with life and animal spirits. Not until Fielding's day shall we see again such a healthy, joyous band, such a careful study of the Englishman made from nature unidealized. Chaucer's power as a delineator came largely from his objectiveness. Occleve's portrait of the poet is significant: it represents him with pointed finger. It was Chaucer's mission to point out the individual and his distinguishing characteristics, so that others could see

them. With a few strokes he completes the picture, and it is alive forever.

Chaucer's place as a poet has been established for centuries; he is one of the four great masters who have used the English tongue, and his name stands high on the roll of the great poets of the world. His appearance marks in reality the birth of English literature. The Teutonic and the Celtic elements had at last fully blended, and the English race in its final form had been evolved.

REQUIRED READINGS. The *Legende of Good Women;* the general Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* and the Prologues to the several tales; *The Knighte's Tale; The Nonnes Priestes Tale; The Pardoner's Tale;* Longfellow's sonnet, *Chaucer.*

III. PROSE

The age of Chaucer is also noted for its vernacular prose, a literary form that had been practically unknown in England since the days of Ælfric. It arose spontaneously to meet the new demands of the times. Wyclif's "poor priests" could get at the people through no other medium; Mandeville's *Travels,* the most entertaining work of the age, could come to the great mass of Englishmen by no other channel. Even Chaucer made large use of it. Two of the *Canterbury Tales,* his own tale, curiously enough, and that of the parson, who took advantage of his opportunity to preach a long sermon, are in prose, and the poet also used it for his vigorous translation of Boëthius and for his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* made during his last years for the instruction of his little son. In a sense, then, Chaucer may be called the father

of English prose as well as of English poetry. The title, however, belongs more properly to John Wyclif, who gave added permanency to the new tongue by translating into it the entire Bible.

1. John Wyclif (c. 1324–1384)

Life by **Lewis Sergeant,** Heroes of the Nations; **Poole,** *Wyclif and Movements for Reform;* **Morley,** Vol. v.; **Trevelyan,** *England in the Age of Wycliffe.*

The low ebb to which the Church had fallen has been already noted. Langland had written with fierce pen of the tendencies of the time, of pilgrims and palmers who went to Rome

> And hadden leave to lien all hir life after;

of the great crowds of hermits,

> Great loobies and long, that loath were to swink,

that had entered orders their "ease for to have"; of friars and pardoners

> Preaching the people for profit of hem selve:
> Glosed the gospel as hem good liked;
> For covetise of copes [1] construed it as they would.

Gower in his aristocratic Latin had declaimed earnestly against Church abuses. Chaucer, under the guise of playful satire, had touched the evils. He had laughed heartily at the worldly monk, the wanton friar, and the mercenary pardoner; but even as he laughed he had left upon his page, etched sharp and deep, a burning sense

[1] Rich clothes.

of the utter mockery of it all, of the awful deadness of the spiritual life. If his picture be true, " as it assuredly is," says Browne, " who can wonder that Wyclif arose in England, and that the echo of his footsteps did not die out till Luther arose in Germany ? "

Despite the narrowness and the utter unprogressiveness of the universities that were filling Europe with such a clattering of flails upon century-old straw, it was from out of them, after all, that nearly all the real reformers of the age were to come. Oxford had already produced a Roger Bacon, and now she was to send forth a still greater character. Until middle life John Wyclif was a schoolman of the ordinary type. He became early noted for his profound scholarship; he was made master of Balliol College, and later he became the leading figure in the English Church. The details of his career need not be given. Suffice it to say that he set himself vigorously against the tide of corruption that was fast destroying the Church; that he even denied the papal supremacy and questioned the fundamental doctrine of transubstantiation. As a result he found himself at war with the entire ecclesiastical body. The Pope launched five bulls against him; and his own college, after carefully examining his writings and finding " two hundred and sixty-seven opinions worthy of fire," turned him out of its halls. Wyclif defended himself with a vigorous fusillade of pamphlets, a method of warfare of his own invention, but he undoubtedly would have suffered violence but for his powerful friend, John of Gaunt.

The greater part of Wyclif's writings are in Latin. It was only during the last six or eight years of his life that he devoted himself to the vernacular. To combat the

evils which the wandering friars and other ecclesiastics were bringing upon England, he had sent out from his little parish at Lutterworth, where he passed his last years, wandering preachers, who were known as Wyclif's poor priests, or as Lollards. The parish priest of Chaucer's Prologue, who was poor in purse

> But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk,

is a perfect likeness of one of these holy men. They worked among the common people and gave, by their self-sacrificing and earnest preaching, a new ideal of the spiritual life. Within a few years they had well-nigh revolutionized England. For his band of workers Wyclif furnished sermons and tracts, written of necessity in English, for use among the masses; and to facilitate the work he began the translation of the Bible into the vernacular tongue. The great reformer did not attempt the work single-handed. Nicholas Hereford, his disciple, translated the greater part of the Old Testament, and his assistant at Lutterworth, Thomas Purvey, thoroughly revised the entire work, but the impress of the master mind is upon every page. The poor priests distributed the book widely, often dealing out pages or chapters to those too poor to afford more. Its popularity was marvelous. Despite the active efforts of its enemies during a long period to root it utterly out of England, no less than one hundred and fifty manuscripts in whole or in part still remain. "The Bible," says Sergeant, "which had hitherto been jealously and mysteriously withheld, sank during these generations so deeply into the popular mind that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries found all England saturated with Biblical knowledge."

Made as it was for the evangelization of the poor, Wyclif's Bible is written in the simple language of the common people. Its influence during the critical period of the English language was very great. Scattered thickly over all England, it became a model for later writers, and it did much to bring uniformity to the new tongue and to establish its vocabulary.

REQUIRED READING. The *Books of Job, Psalms*, etc., Clarendon Press Series, selections.

2. *Sir John Mandeville (1300?–1371?)*

Of Sir John Mandeville we know little save what comes from the pages of the book that bears his name. According to the opening chapter of this work, he was born in St. Albans. Desiring to see the Holy Land he left England in 1322, and the spirit of wandering being upon him he continued to drift from land to land during the next thirty years.

He "passed thorghout Turkye, Ermonye the litylle and the grete, Tartarye, Percye, Surrye, Arabye, Egypt the high and the lowe; through Lybye, Culdee, and a gret partie of Ethiope; thorgh Amazoyne, Inde the lasse and the more, a gret partie; and thorought many other iles, that ben abouten Inde; where dwellen many dyverse folk, and of dyverse maneres and lawes, and of dyverse schappes of men."

The *Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Mandeville*, which purports to be the record of this journey, is a strange mixture. Its descriptions of the Holy Land bear the marks of genuineness,—they are evidently the work of an eye-witness; but when the narrative leaves the beaten path and wanders into regions vaguely known in the fifteenth century, it becomes correspondingly vague and increasingly marvelous. It tells with all seriousness of

a race of men having but one foot which they used as a sunshade, and of islands of adamant that draw irresistibly to themselves all ships having iron in their construction.

But the work is no longer taken seriously as the record of an actual traveler. It is rather an encyclopædia of travel, bringing under one cover all that was known or imagined during the Middle Ages concerning the world outside of Europe. It was translated from the French by an unknown author near the close of the century, and so skilfully was the work done that not until our own day was the hoax revealed.

But whoever its author, he was the master of a simple, straightforward prose style. It is the prose of a man who, like Wyclif, is writing for the common people, who has a story to tell, and who tells it in a terse, unlabored way. It can even now be read with interest. During the century after its publication, it was, with the single exception of Wyclif's Bible, the most popular book in England.

SUGGESTED READING. Mandeville in *Early Travels in Palestine*, Bohn; Morris and Skeat's *Specimens*, Part ii. For a complete analysis of the Mandeville question, see *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

TABLE IV.—THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

PERIODS.[1]	CHARACTERISTICS AND EVENTS.	BOOKS AND WRITERS.
I. PERIOD OF FOUNDATIONS. 449–1066. The evolution of the native tongue.	The period of dialects. Three of them prominent. 1002. Marriage of Æthelred to Emma the Norman. 1042. Edward the Confessor. Beginning of direct Norman influence. 1066. Anglo-Saxon no longer the standard language.	NORTHERN. Cædmon, c. 680. Cynewulf, 8th century. SOUTHERN. Ælfred, 849-901. Ælfric, c. 990.
II. PERIOD OF SUSPENSE. 1066–1250. The native tongue holding its own against the French.	Three distinct languages in England: Latin, the official language of Church and State; French, the polite language of court and nobility; and English, the vulgar tongue spoken by the natives. 1154. Anglo-Saxon Chronicle closes. English works, like the *Brut*, contain almost no traces of French influence; French works, like those of Map, contain no trace of English.	Layamon's *Brut*, c. 1205. *Ormulum*, c. 1215. *Ancren Riwle*, c. 1225. Walter Map, d. 1210.
III. PERIOD OF GRADUAL TRANSITION. 1250–1350. Native tongue steadily gaining.	1258. Proclamation of Henry III. in English. 1274–1307. Edward I. "used English familiarly." Period of French romances with English translations.	*Havelok the Dane*, 1270–1280. Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*. 1300. *Guy of Warwick*.

[1] The dates are mere approximations.

Periods.	Characteristics and Events.	Books and Writers.
IV. Period of Rapid Transition. 1350–1400. Saxon and French blend into English.	1362. Parliament first opened with an English speech. 1362. Statute requiring that pleadings in the law courts be in English. 1375. Trevisa's translation of *Polychronicon*—the first revival of the old English chronicle. 1375. Oldest extant private records in English. 1385. English rather than French used in the schools. 1386. Earliest English petition to Parliament. 1387. Earliest English will.	*Piers Plowman*, 1362. Chaucer's *Dethe of Blaunche*, 1369. Mandeville's *Travels:* French, 1370. English, c. 1400. *Canterbury Tales*, 1373–1393. Wyclif's Bible, 1380. Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, c. 1393.
V. The Beginnings of Modern English. 1400–1557. The language augmented, enriched, and purified.	During this period the English language was firmly established. 1413–1422. Henry V. sends ambassadors to France who could neither speak nor understand French. 1444. Petitions and wills regularly in English. 1477. Caxton's press set up in England. 1488. Birth of Coverdale. 1491. Grocyn teaches Greek at Oxford. 1505. Birth of John Knox. 1515. Birth of Roger Ascham. 1535. Death of Thomas More. 1542. Death of Wyatt. 1557. *Tottel's Miscellany*	Paston Letters, 1422–1507. Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, c. 1470. Caxton's Translation of *Reynard*, 1481. Skelton, 1460–1529. More's *Utopia*, 1516. Tyndal's Translation, 1525. Latimer's *Plowers*, 1549.

TABLE V.—THE AGE OF CHAUCER, 1350–1400.

English Literature.	English History.	Foreign Literature.
I. Poetry. 1. William Langland, c. 1332–c. 1400. *Piers Plowman.* 2. John Gower, c. 1330–1408. *Vox Clamantis* (Latin). *Confessio Amantis.* 3. Geoffrey Chaucer, 1340–1400. *The Parlament of Foules.* *Troilus and Criseyde.* *The Hous of Fame.* *The Legende of Good Women.* *Treatise on the Astrolabe.* *The Canterbury Tales.* II. Prose. 1. John Wyclif, c. 1324–1384. *Translation of the Bible.* 2. Sir John Mandeville, 1300?–1371?. *The Voiage and Travaile.*	1327–1377. Edward III. 1339. Beginnings of the Hundred Years' War. 1346. Battle of Crécy. 1349. First appearance of Black Death. 1356. Battle of Poitiers. 1359. Chaucer taken by the French. 1372. Chaucer meets Petrarch. 1377. Chaucer's mission to France. 1377–1399. Richard II. 1381. Wat Tyler's Revolt. 1382. Suppression of Wyclif's poor priests. 1384. Death of Wyclif. 1389. Truce with France. 1390. Chaucer clerk of King's works. 1399–1413. Henry IV. 1399. Persecution of the Lollards.	Dante, 1265–1321. *Vita Nuova*, 1307. *Divina Commedia*, 1307?–1321?. Petrarch, 1304–1375. *Sonnets and Lyrics.* Boccaccio, 1313–1375. *The Decameron*, 1350. Petrarch Crowned at Rome, 1341. Giotto, Italian artist, 1276–1336. Froissart, French Chronicler, 1337–1410.

CHAPTER XI

THE CENTURY OF DARKNESS

1400–1485

From the Death of Chaucer to the Accession of Henry VII

Authorities. **Gairdner,** *The Houses of Lancaster and York; The Paston Letters* (Bohn), a series of private letters written between 1422 and 1507, throw a flood of light upon the manners and the spirit of the age; **Shakespeare's** *Richard II., Henry IV., Henry V., Henry VI.,* and *Richard III.* should be studied with care in connection with **Warner,** *English History in Shakespeare's Plays.*

In literature and in civilization generally, the century after the death of Chaucer was a time of almost total eclipse, well-nigh as dark as that which in earlier days had followed the era of Northumbria. Taine even calls it the age of pagan renaissance. With the death of Chaucer the new literature which had sprung up everywhere in England with such richness and variety, and which had seemed but the promise of a more glorious future, ceased as suddenly as it had begun. A few singers there were like Occleve and Lydgate who for a time feebly imitated their great master, but they were soon silent and the century dragged on to its close as if the great era of Chaucer had never been.

The reasons for this sudden relapse are plainly evi-

dent. It was a century of civil war, when the nation was learning at a fearful price the lesson of self-control; and it was an era of most narrow religious intolerance. Not until there is freedom of thought and freedom of conscience can there be a national literature.

The Later Plantagenets. The dark days for England had begun even before the death of Chaucer. The early death of the Black Prince caused the succession to fall to his son, Richard II. But his reign was so full of weakness and injustice that Henry, son of John of Gaunt, aided by the Percies and other powerful houses, had even dared to rise against him. In 1399, only a few months before Chaucer's death, this daring young noble succeeded in his rebellion, deposed the King, and although he was not in the direct line of succession, seized the crown under the title of Henry IV. This act of usurpation kept England in a tumult for nearly a century, and precipitated the quarrel between baron and baron which was bound to come sooner or later, and which eventually cleared from England the last vestiges of the feudal system.

LANCASTER.
(Red Rose.)
Henry IV., 1399–1413.
Henry V., –1422.
Henry VI., –1461.
YORK.
(White Rose.)
Edward IV., 1483.
Edward V., 1483.
Richard III., 1485.

The storm soon burst with fury upon Henry, but the King was master of the situation and at the battle of Shrewsbury dealt such a blow at the great houses which had arisen against him that the feudal power did not rally again for a generation. His son, Henry V., was a strong, masterful man, one of the brilliant figures in English history. He saw clearly his position,—England was a powder-mill that a single spark might destroy; and with cool wisdom he adopted the plan of Edward III.—

To busy giddy minds
With foreign quarrels.

The brilliant campaign that culminated in the victory of Agincourt followed; all France was at the King's feet, and for a moment the old thrill of the days of Crécy swept over England. But it was only for a moment. The great King died in the midst of his triumph, and his son, only nine months old, was crowned in his cradle. The strong wills of the two Henrys had stayed the tide of civil discord, but now there was no hand to check it, for even when the young King became of age he was but a child. During his whole life he was a shuttlecock tossed between powerful factions. Little by little the French territory won by his father was wrested away, for a great power, the peasant maiden, Joan of Arc, had arisen in France. Soon there was but the little town of Calais to show for the brilliant and costly wars of the former reign, and now the house of York, led by the powerful baron Warwick, who boasted that on festal days he fed thirty thousand at his table, boldly demanded its rights, wrested from it by the usurper Henry IV. The Wars of the Roses followed, and for thirty years the island was a battlefield. The conflict so long inevitable had burst upon England with fury,—seldom in history does one find so savage and so bloody a struggle. No quarter was asked or given. After every battle there was a wholesale beheading, until almost all the nobility of the kingdom were destroyed. Whole houses like that of Warwick and of Somerset were exterminated to a man. When the Wars of the Roses

1415. Agincourt.
1429. Siege of Orleans, raised by Joan of Arc.
1455. Battle of St. Albans.
1461. Battle of Towton.
1471. Battle of Tewkesbury.
1485. Battle of Bosworth Field.

were over, the great wreck of the feudal system that had cumbered and threatened the land since the days of Henry II. was swept entirely from English soil.

This struggle, so fearfully cruel and bloody, was the last lesson in that harsh school whose first master had been William the Norman. It was a lesson that England had sooner or later to learn if she was ever to become a united, self-centered nation.

Another and perhaps more important cause for the literary barrenness of the period was the policy of religious repression adopted by Henry IV. and continued with fierceness until the middle of the century. Protected by John of Gaunt, Wyclif had sown broadcast the seeds of religious and intellectual emancipation. For half a century England had thrilled with a new life; literature had flourished, originality of thought and opinion had been tolerated. But no sooner was the great Duke dead than the tide turned. In 1400 a fierce decree against the Lollards was enacted, and during the following half-century no efforts were spared to root out the effects of Wyclif's sowing. The colleges were prominent in the persecution, and as a result learning sank lower and lower. Since all free inquiry, all originality, was heresy, scholarship must continue to beat at the old straw, and literature must be content to echo masters who had sung in more fortunate days.

SUGGESTED READING. Drayton, *Ballad of Agincourt* (Ward, *English Poets*); Scott, *The Fair Maid of Perth;* Bulwer, *The Last of the Barons;* Southey, *Joan of Arc.*

1. William Caxton (c. 1421–1491)

(*Life*, by **William Blades,**—scholarly and exhaustive; **Morley,** vi., Ch. xiv.)

While the darkness of the period was most dense there entered England, silently and unobserved, a force that was destined to revolutionize the nation's intellectual life. The advent of Caxton with his printing press divides sharply the history of English literature. All before him is the old; all after him the new.

Caxton was of English parentage, a native of Kent; but being apprenticed to a mercer he was early taken abroad, and in 1450 we find him a prosperous merchant of Bruges. He remained in the Flemish city during the next twenty-five years, an active and important business man, kept in constant trouble by the trade relations between England and the Low Countries. In 1468 a change in the treaty relieved him of much of his labor, and he immediately began to improve his leisure hours by making a translation from the French. Three years later he had completed an English version of *Le Recueil des Histoires de Troye*. It became exceedingly popular, but the old difficulty that had confronted every successful writer since the earliest times now arose before Caxton. The reduplication of manuscripts was a long and tedious process. He copied until his eyes were "dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper," and then he bethought himself of the newly discovered art of printing which had just been introduced into Bruges. As a result his translation of the *Recueil* was printed in 1474, perhaps at Bruges, probably at Cologne, thereby winning the distinction of being the first English book reproduced by movable types. Caxton was evidently charmed with his new accomplishment. In 1476 he took a complete printing outfit to London, and the next year he produced *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, the first book ever

printed in England. From this date until 1491 Caxton's press was in constant activity. He threw into his new work all the marvelous energy that had characterized him as a business man. He translated from the French twenty-one books, mainly romances, and issued them sometimes in several editions. He produced editions of Chaucer, Gower, Malory, and Lydgate, besides translations from the Latin and the Dutch. "He printed in fourteen years," says his biographer, "more than eighteen thousand pages, nearly all of folio size, and nearly eighty separate books."

The service that Caxton rendered the English language and literature cannot be overestimated. He selected with a careful hand the best that English literature had produced, and he made it possible for it to be distributed widely; the author was no longer at the mercy of the copyist; large numbers of a work, absolutely uniform, could be produced, a fact that in itself did much to settle English speech. But Caxton did more: he was the first English editor; he supplied introductory matter and insisted upon uniformity of orthography and diction. His own prose style, although not especially notable, is nevertheless vigorous and idiomatic. "He stood," says Green, "between two schools of translation, that of French affectation and English pedantry"; and his sturdy good sense bade him use the strong, homely English that he heard all about him.

The publications of the first printer, with their simple, honest introductions, throw a flood of light upon his character and his time. He loved romance and the old tales of chivalry.

O blessed Lord [he cried] when I remembre the grete and many volumes

of Seynt Graal, Ghalehot & Launcelotte de Lake, Gawayn, Perceval, Lyonel, and Tristram, and many other, of whom were over longe to reherce, and also to me unknowen! But thy storye of the said Arthur is so gloryous and shyning that he is stalled in the fyrst place of the moost noble, beste and worthyest of the Cristen men.

But Caxton was not alone in his enthusiasm. Romance was still the chief literary diet of those who could read, as it had been ever since the Normans had brought it into the island four centuries before.

2. *Sir Thomas Malory*

Authorities. The Globe Edition; **Sommer's** Edition, 3 vols., is the leading authority; **Mead's** *Selections from Le Morte d'Arthur*, with its excellent introduction, is the most helpful for the general student; see also **Rhys'**, *Studies in the Arthur Legend.*

In July, 1485, there issued from Caxton's press the most important work produced in England during the century, — *Le Morte d'Arthur* of Sir Thomas Malory. The book comes suddenly before us like one of Merlin's creations. Of its origin and its author we know almost nothing. It "was ended the ix yere of the reygne of King Edward the fourth [1470] by Syr Thomas Maleore Knight"; a copy was delivered to Caxton, "whyche copye Syr Thomas Malorye dyd take oute of certeyn bookes of frensshe and reduced it in to Englysshe"; and it was edited, furnished with preface and table of contents, divided into books and chapters, and printed by Caxton. So much we gather from the work itself. All attempts to supply more details and to connect the author with any historical personage must rest upon conjecture.

But the personality of the old knight breathes from

every page of his romance. He was a survival, a Don Quixote, a courtly figure, who had wandered into a degenerate age and whose thoughts and dreams were of the old days. The time was ripe for the work; no other century could have produced it. The generation before Malory had lived in the Middle Ages; the generation after him smiled at the pompous ideals of their grandfathers. But as chivalry was passing away there came over it the golden light that ever is wont to envelop the fading system or the vanishing race, and the hand of the master caught it at the right moment and fixed it forever. All that was brightest and most romantic in chivalry lives and breathes on the pages of Malory. We find there not the life of the Middle Ages as it was actually lived, but the ideals and the dreams of that age transfigured and made golden by four centuries of dreamers.

It is a fairyland that the old knight lives in, peopled with the bravest men and the fairest women that fancy can create. Marvelous events come thick and fast and as a matter of course. Blocks descend with swords infixed which only the true may draw forth; magic letters spring up conveying hidden messages; enchanters appear in strange forms to reveal the future. It is true to no life that ever was outside of dreamland, and yet it breathes the very soul of mediæval life,—its pomp and glitter, its superstition, its ideals and dreams, with all its hollowness and fantastic bigotry, its selfishness and cruelty, refined away.

Malory found his materials in the French romances that had been accumulating since the days of Wace, but his work is far more than a mere translation. The vast accumulations of Arthurian romance were a pathless chaos,

a mere heap, before Malory touched them. Episode after episode had been added to the legend by various hands, until it was an incoherent mass, inconsistent with itself. It was Malory's task to select from this confusion whatever was worthy of preservation; to arrange it into a consecutive, harmonious whole, and to express it in clear, simple English.

The influence of the *Morte d'Arthur* upon later writers has been conspicuous. It has been a veritable storehouse from which almost every great poet since Malory's day has copiously drawn. Nor has its influence been confined to poets. It is not too much to say that it is the one book written in English before Shakespeare's day, saving Chaucer alone, that is still widely read solely on its merits. Its charm lies in its golden atmosphere, in its perfect simplicity and crystal clearness, and in the absorbing interest of its episodes, which follow each other in breathless succession. Its style is artless and seemingly spontaneous. There are no strainings after effect, no labored constructions and artificial devices such as we find so freely in later English prose. It is condensed and forcible, full of quaint expressions and picturesque phrases. One need not read far to agree with Mead that its author was "the greatest master of prose before the revival of learning."

REQUIRED READING. Mead, *Selections from Morte d'Arthur*. If less is required, read books xiii. and xvii. Lanier's *Boys' King Arthur* is an excellent compilation, to be read if possible.

3. The Old English Ballads

Authorities. Professor **Child's** article in *Johnson's Cyclopædia.* The earliest and most famous collection of

old English ballads is *Percy's Reliques;* the most complete and scholarly is Professor **Child,** *English and Scottish Ballads;* the best collections for the general student are those of **Gummere** (Athenæum Press Series), and of **Katherine Lee Bates.**

The century was not destitute of poets. Occleve, Lydgate, King James I., Skelton, and others were voluminous singers, but they were content either to echo their great master Chaucer or to drone monotonously in their own key. A few of the Scottish bards, like Dunbar and Douglas, struck original notes, but their work was not strong enough to change at all the current of the age.

The only poems of the century that are still readable with pleasure are the quaint old ballads, like *A Geste of Robyn Hode*, *The Battle of Otterburn*, *Chevy Chace*, and *Nut-Brown Maid* that have drifted, without name or date to our own times. These ballads are the lineal descendants of the old Saxon minstrelsy,—of *Beowulf* and *Judith* and the *Battle of Brunanburh.* They sprang like all primitive epic poetry from the common folk, who took huge delight in their stirring lines. The offspring at first of single singers, they were passed on by tradition, receiving in transit many additions and changes, and they were sung, perhaps with instrumental accompaniment, at the gatherings and merrymakings of the people. Doubtless the most popular of all the ballads was that cycle of stories which gathered around the name of Robin Hood, whose bold, free life in the greenwood forest, whose skill with the long-bow and whose pluck and daring have made him the typical hero of English folk-lore. Perhaps the most spirited of the ballads and the one with the greatest literary merit is *Chevy Chace*, or its older and

better version, *The Hunting of the Cheviot.* The popularity of this poem has always been marvelous. "Certainly I must confess mine own barbarousness," declared Sir Philip Sidney; "I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blind Crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style." Ballads of the English border have continued to be made even to our own day. Sir Walter Scott at the beginning of the century collected three volumes of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,* much of which had never before been written down.

The charm of the ballads lies in their simplicity and their unconscious art. The meter often hobbles and the movement is by no means uniform, yet the story is told with effectiveness. The stirring scene stands graphically before us; the interest is sustained to the end, and the climax is skilfully managed. There is much in the ballads to remind one of the old Saxon poetry. There are the same picturesque epithets and recurring phrases; the same parallel constructions and alliteration. As we read them there comes before us the same stalwart figure that we found centuries before in *Beowulf.* The Englishman of the ballads is the Englishman of the primal poetry, with more civilization and a larger horizon, yet at heart unchanged.

REQUIRED READING. *The Hunting of the Cheviot* and a *Geste of Robyn Hode.* See also Addison, *Spectator,* 70–74.

4. *The Religious Drama*

Authorities. **Pollard,** *English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes;* **Ten Brink,** Vol. ii.; **Symonds,**

Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama; **Bates,** *English Religious Drama;* **Tolman,** *Bibliography of the English Drama before Elizabeth* (University of Chicago Press).

Our survey of the century would be incomplete without a consideration of the mystery or miracle play, which during this age reached in England its most flourishing stage. It was by no means a new thing; it had been slowly evolving for centuries, but so small is its literary merit that were it not that from it was developed the Elizabethan drama it would doubtless be overlooked.

The germs of the miracle play must be sought for on the continent, in France and Germany. It seems to have sprung almost spontaneously from the Roman Catholic ritual. The great mass of the people during all the Middle Ages were rude and unlettered. To impress upon them the solemn lessons of Christmas and Easter and other holy days, the Latin service was made as objective as possible. A crucifix was buried with impressive ceremonies on the evening of Good Friday, to be resurrected with joyous hymns on Easter morn. So successful was this device that it was gradually improved upon; characters were introduced, with dialogue and appropriate costumes, until the Easter service had become in all its essentials a passion play. Other festival days were similarly observed, and so popular did the service become that the Church could no longer hold the eager multitudes who pressed for admittance. The priests were forced to perform the service in the churchyard and later on the village green. At first only ecclesiastics took part, but at length laymen were admitted, and the play drifted farther and farther from the service until at

last, by order of the Pope, the priests withdrew and left it wholly a secular performance.

The miracle play was brought into England by the Normans during the twelfth century. Its popularity was so immediate that by the middle of the next century it had spread over the entire island. In certain cities, notably at Chester and York, there sprang up elaborate play cycles, written doubtless by ecclesiastics and enacted once each year by actors chosen from the citizens. One hundred and sixty-one of these plays have been preserved, and among them, by great good fortune, there are four complete cycles: the Chester cycle, of twenty-five plays, which was in continual use between the years 1268 and 1577; the Towneley cycle, which consisted of thirty-two; the Coventry, which consisted of forty-two; and the York, which contained forty-eight.

On the day chosen for the presentation of a cycle of plays the country for miles around was in motion; the city was thronged with eager multitudes. At an early hour the play began. A large van or platform, divided into two rooms, the lower to be used as a dressing-room, the upper as a stage, came rolling into the market-place in charge of one of the city guilds. After a short prologue the actors chosen from the guild of tanners began upon the stage to enact the fall of Lucifer. The play at length over, the van was drawn into the next street to repeat the performance to a new audience, while its place was taken by another van in charge of the plasterers, whose duty it was to enact the creation of the world. Then came the shipwrights, who represented the building of the ark; and the fishmongers and mariners, who enacted the episode of the flood. Thus

one by one the vans, each in charge of its guild, rolled by, until the entire twenty-five plays had been presented. In many places the acting covered several days, and in one case a whole week was given over to the festivities.

The intrinsic merit of the plays, aside from their importance as germs of the drama, is not large. They were written with religious rather than literary intent, and compared with the elaborate productions of a later day they seem like the crude attempts of schoolboys. But let no one despise the drama that can hold for more than three centuries an unbroken popularity. The plays were made with all sincerity and earnestness, and they accomplished to the full the object for which they were created. Nor are they devoid of a certain unintentional art, which came from the very earnestness of the author to drive his lesson home. Unity of action is fully observed, all of the personages and episodes being grouped in every case about one central act or situation. Here and there, notably in the Brome version of *Abraham and Isaac*, there is a true pathos handled with dramatic skill; there are traces also of lyric inspiration, notably in the Brome play, which opens with the invocation:

> Father of heaven omnipotent,
> With all my heart to thee I call;

and scattered everywhere through the plays may be found traces of humor, rude and boisterous, yet none the less effective, as in *Noah's Flood*, where the patriarch's wife refuses to enter the ark.

The influence of the miracle plays upon the rude peasantry, the majority of whom had no other way of acquiring Scriptural truths, must not be overlooked. The

country boor witnessed with all reverence the scenes that passed before him. Biblical stories and lessons were impressed upon his slow mind with a vividness that nothing else could have given. The figure of the meek and lowly Christ, bearing with patience the insults heaped upon Him, and forgiving with His last breath the enemies who had slain Him, was made a living reality to the brutal Saxon; and the spectacle softened and civilized him more than would centuries of mere preaching. The miracle play not only molded his spiritual and religious life, but it gave intellectual stimulus as well. All classes, the high and the low, took unmeasured delight in it. It was almost their only intellectual amusement. It took the place of the old scop and minstrel; it was newspaper, novel, and theater combined, and it educated the masses more than can be estimated. Later, when the new impulse came, and England, awakened from the slumber of the Middle Ages, began to create a new and classic drama, it found an audience eager to receive and competent to appreciate.

REQUIRED READING. The Brome version of *Abraham and Isaac* and the Towneley version of *Noah's Flood*, both in Manly, *Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama*, Athenæum Press Series.

TABLE VI.—THE AGE OF DARKNESS, 1400–1485.

English Literature.	English History.	Foreign.
Occleve, c. 1365–c. 1450.	1399–1413. Henry IV.	1410. Death of Froissart.
De Regimine Principium.	1403. Revolt of the Percies.	1415. John Huss burned.
Lament for Chaucer.	1403–4. French descents upon England.	1420. 400 Greek MSS. brought to Italy.
John Lydgate, died c. 1450.	1405. James I. prisoner in England.	1431. Birth of Villon.
The Siege of Troy.	1413–1422. Henry V.	1452–1498. Savonarola.
The Falls of Princes.	1415. Battle of Agincourt.	1453. Constantinople taken.
James I. of Scotland, 1394–1437.	1417. Henry invades Normandy.	1455. Guttenburg prints Mazarin Bible.
The King's Quhair.	1422–1461. Henry VI.	1469. Birth of Machiavelli.
Caxton. c. 1422–1491.	1428–9. Siege of Orleans.	1469–1492. Lorenzo de Medici.
Reynard the Fox, 1481.	1431. Death of Joan of Arc.	1471. À Kempis' *Imitation of Christ.*
Malory.	1450. Loss of Normandy.	1474. Birth of Ariosto.
Morte d'Arthur, 1470.	1455. First Battle of St. Albans.	1483. Birth of Luther.
Skelton, c. 1460–1529.	1461. Battle of Wakefield.	
Colin Clout.	1461–1483. Edward IV.	
Philip Sparrow.	1461. Battle of Towton.	
Why Come ye not to Court?	1461–71. Warwick the king-maker.	
Dunbar, c. 1460–c. 1530.	1464. Edward marries Lady Grey.	
The Thistle and the Rose.	1471. Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury.	
Ballads,	1475. Edward invades France.	
The Battle of Otterburn.	1483–1483. Edward V.	
Chevy Chace.	1483. Murder of Edward V.	
Nut-Brown Maid, etc.	1483–1485. Richard III.	
Miracle Plays,	1485. Battle of Bosworth Field.	
Chester Cycle.		
York Cycle.		
Towneley Cycle.		
Coventry Cycle.		

CHAPTER XII

THE AGE OF THE RENAISSANCE

1485–1557

FROM THE ACCESSION OF HENRY VII. TO THE PUBLICATION OF "TOTTEL'S MISCELLANY"

The Later Renaissance. (The standard English history of the period is **Symonds,** *Renaissance in Italy;* a more condensed and convenient work for the general student is **Schaff,** *The Renaissance.* See also **Mrs. Oliphant,** *The Makers of Florence,* **Taine,** *Lectures on Art,* and **Roscoe,** *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.*)

While England was lying thus in darkness, wasting its energies and starving its soul in endless civil wars, there was springing up in Italy—in Florence and Rome—a new life that was destined to spread over all Europe. The enthusiasm of the earlier Renaissance, of the days of Dante and Petrarch and Boccaccio, had almost ebbed away, but now it arose again with tenfold power. The immediate cause of the awakening was the renewal of contact between the Western and the Eastern civilizations of Europe. Early in the fifteenth century scholars from Byzantium had wandered to Italy, bringing with them the language and the masterpieces of ancient Greece. Still later, in 1453, when Constantinople, which for years had been the seat of the world's best civilization, yielded to the Turk, there was another migration of scholars westward. Manu-

scripts and art treasures from the conquered city poured into Italy. The effect was immediate. Greece was rediscovered, even as Egypt and Assyria have been in our own day, and the discovery caused an awakening which can be compared only with the revolution in natural science which marks the nineteenth century. A new world was opened before the eyes of scholars, and its minutest details were studied with eager interest. The world was ransacked for manuscripts and relics of antiquity. During the pontificate of Nicholas V. (1447–1455) the Vatican library was founded, soon to become the most valuable collection of books since the library of Alexandria. Nicholas himself bought for it no less than five thousand rare manuscripts, and soon the number was greatly increased. From books the collectors turned to statuary and art. The great masterpieces, many of which, like the *Laocoön* group, the torso of Hercules, and the *Apollo Belvedere*, had been lost for centuries, were recovered and brought to the Vatican.

The center of the new Italy was Florence, the magnificent, "the flower of cities." Rich and powerful families like the Medici poured out their wealth to adorn it, to make it the home of beauty and refinement, of art and poetry and scholarship. There could be but one result. Contact with the masters of ancient Greece and Rome brought in a new conception of human life, new ideals, new dreams. A joyous and eager intellectual life began in Florence and Italy. There arose a new school of poets,—Ariosto, Michel Angelo, Tasso, and the rest, successors of Dante and Petrarch. There sprang up all at once in a single generation the most marvelous group of painters that the world has ever seen. Italy had be-

come a nation of scholars, of antiquarians; of poets, artists, enthusiasts. "The Italians," says Schaff, "took the place of the ancient Greeks, and even surpassed them as poets and artists. Republican Florence rivaled and outshone Athens as a home of genius, and papal Rome excelled imperial Rome in the liberal patronage of letters and arts."

Da Vinci, 1452-1519.
Fra Bartolommeo, 1469-1517.
Michel Angelo, 1475-1564.
Titian, 1477-1576.
Giorgione, 1478-1511.
Raphael, 1483-1520.
Correggio, 1493-1534.

From Italy the new humanistic movement passed on to Germany and Holland, where there soon arose a group of scholars and painters well-nigh as marvelous as those of Italy. The printing press, a product of Germany, was in itself a renaissance. It "gave wings to literature," scattering to the winds the treasures so long the exclusive property of the rich. By its aid the new learning quickly penetrated all Europe, preparing it for the mighty upheaval of the Reformation and marking the dividing line between mediæval and modern history.

England. The movement came late to England. While all Italy was thrilling with new intellectual life, darkness still hung over the island like a morning fog. To the scholars of Florence in the days of the Medici, Britain was a land of barbarians, even as it had seemed in the early centuries as viewed from Rome. What was refinement to the rude North? Were the English not coarse and brutal, enormous eaters and drinkers? Had they not spent a century in mutual slaughter like the wolves that they were?

But with the accession of the first Tudor there dawned a new era. The houses of Lancaster and York had been nearly exterminated; when Richard fell at Bosworth Field there was none to oppose the victor. With mar-

velous activity the young King proceeded to fortify himself. He united the red and the white roses by wedding Margaret, the heiress of York; he made harmless all possible heirs to the throne; he crushed with vigor two rebellions, the last ebbing energies of the great wars; and he used Caxton's press to scatter broadcast over England a clear exposition of his title to the crown. He was soon secure, with a firmer seat upon the throne than had any other king since Edward III., and, once secure, he turned all his energies toward the arts of peace. For a generation England was free from war; free to build up her shattered industries and to repair everywhere the wreck caused by the century of civil strife.

The Oxford Reformers. (**Froude,** *Life and Letters of Erasmus;* **Seebohm,** *Oxford Reformers;* **Bridgett,** *Life of More;* **Knight,** *Life of Colet;* **Johnson,** *Life of Linacre.*)

It was during this lull after the storm that two Oxford students, Grocyn and Linacre, returned from Italy bringing with them the true Renaissance spirit, to open at the University courses in Greek with an enthusiasm akin to that of Theodore and Hadrian in Anglo-Saxon days. Still later, in 1496, John Colet, the leading intellect of his generation, fresh from the Italy of Lorenzo de' Medici and Savonarola, announced a course of lectures on St. Paul's Epistles, to be given from the new standpoint of Greek scholarship.

The effect of such a torrent in the stagnant marsh of scholastic Oxford can hardly be imagined. For centuries education had consisted of a minute study of the schoolmen,—of Duns Scotus, Aquinas, and the rest, whose authority was absolute. They had taken universal knowl-

edge as their realm, and they settled all questions, whether of theology, philosophy, or science, with Bible texts, which were interpreted apart from their context in the light of elaborate and fantastic commentaries of the older schoolmen. The letter had become everything; the spirit, nothing. "Twenty doctors," says Tyndale, who received his early education at their hands, "expound one text twenty ways, and with an antitheme [text] of half an inch some of them draw a thread of nine days long." The Bible had become a mere book of sibylline leaves,—a dead storehouse of texts. Even the laws of nature must yield if they clashed with the laws of Aquinas. Progress under such conditions was impossible. Before the age of freedom and discovery could begin, the scholastic system, which fettered all education, must be utterly removed, for "every discovery of science or philosophy contrary to the dicta of the schoolmen was regarded as a crime," and every method of teaching not founded on the old system was heresy.

It is with deep interest, then, that we watch the little band of humanists in Oxford. From the first they seem to have prospered. Eager throngs crowded the lecture-rooms of Colet, and the fame of his methods and his message went abroad over England. Brilliant young students from every quarter of the land caught the true Renaissance enthusiasm and plunged into the study of Greek, to them the veritable key to all truth and beauty. Silently the leaven spread among the best minds of the nation. Learned bishops and statesmen joined the movement; the King himself was in hearty sympathy. Two years after Colet's return from Italy, Oxford had become a center of Greek learning, so that Erasmus, the

great Dutch scholar, too poor to afford a journey to Italy, contented himself with a pilgrimage to England instead. He was delighted with the scholarly atmosphere of Oxford.

With two such friends as Colet and Charnock [he cried] I would not refuse to live even in Scythia. . . I have found in Oxford so much polish and learning . . that now I hardly care about going to Italy at all save for the sake of having been there. When I hear my friend Colet it seems like listening to Plato himself. Who does not wonder at the wide range of Grocyn's knowledge? What could be more searching, deep, and refined than the judgment of Linacre? and when did nature ever mold a character more gentle, endearing, and happy than Thomas More's?

It was the magic of this little group that drew Erasmus again and again across the Channel, so that he belongs almost as much to England as to the continent.

The Trend of the New Learning. But the new learning of England, unlike that of Italy, took from the very start a religious and political turn. It produced no poets; it inspired no artists. Its keynote had been struck by Colet, to whom Greek and the Italian culture were simply a means for obtaining religious truth and purity. And yet, despite the fact that it expended itself in religious controversy, and at last was lost sight of in the smudge that settled over the land during the days of Edward and Mary, it must be carefully considered, since from it came the England of Elizabeth.

Its assault upon scholasticism led inevitably to a criticism of the Church, and never had the Church stood more in need of criticism. The corruption so graphically portrayed by Langland and Chaucer a century before had increased with every year. Before Wyclif's day the Bible had been free; the Lollards had attempted to

spread it broadcast among the people, and to make its message everywhere understood, but they had been cruelly repressed. "An unsuccessful revolution ends in tightening the chains which it ought to have broken." For a century the Bible had been a sealed volume save to those who through a long study of the schoolmen had won the key to the mystic book. Even more than in Langland's day Christianity had become a kind of fetich worship,—a veneration of relics, the most of them deliberately manufactured by the monks; a thing of ceremonies and outward form. Colet and Erasmus denounced in unmeasured terms the worship of relics, the efficacy of pilgrimages, the belief in miracles at shrines, the hollowness of mere formalism. All unconsciously they were spreading under the royal sanction the tenets of the despised Lollards. The same multitudes who, two centuries earlier, had listened with eagerness to the poor priests of Wyclif, now crowded the audience rooms of Colet and Latimer, or read the pamphlets and the translations of Tyndale. Colet and his followers had dreamed of a reformation that should work from the top downwards; that should touch the common people through the regenerated upper classes; but all unconsciously they aroused the people first, thus setting in motion a mighty power which, once started, they were powerless to control.

The Reformation. (**Perry,** *The Reformation in England;* **Seebohm,** *Era of the Protestant Revolution;* **Creighton,** *The Tudors and the Reformation;* **Lingard's** *History of England* tells the story from the Catholic point of view.)

It is at this point that we come to what unquestionably is the most important event in modern history.

It comes suddenly before us. As we read the Tudor annals, all in a moment we witness a transformation. A nation Catholic from its very foundation, serious always and very deeply religious, at the word of its king, seemingly through mere caprice, becomes a Protestant stronghold. A fierce struggle there is, a time when the opposing forces seem to be equal, but it is not long. Under Elizabeth the nation is as firmly Protestant as it was Catholic in the first years of her father. What was the secret of this great movement ? Revolutions never grow in a moment; the law of a king may force outward conformity for a time, but it can never change the heart of a people.

The external causes of the Reformation are not hard to find. They came almost by accident. With the Tudors had opened the era of "personal monarchy," the era of unchecked royal power. The barons, who had curbed the throne since the days of the Conqueror, who had wrested Magna Charta from John, and had deposed Edward II., were dead. Almost to a man they had perished in the civil wars, and the only check upon the king was now the common people, whose one weapon was insurrection,—a terrible engine in the early days, but one made comparatively harmless by the invention of ordnance, an expensive luxury to be had only by royalty. The first Tudor, by his energy and foresight, had entrenched himself beyond the possibility of overthrow and had then proceeded to do his will. His weakness was avarice. He filled his coffers to overflowing with treasure extorted without law or mercy from rich and poor. But his despotism was

THE TUDORS.
Henry VII., 1485–1509.
Henry VIII., –1547.
Edward V., –1553.
Mary, –1558.
Elizabeth, –1603.

mild compared with that of his son. No czar ever ruled with more absolute power than did Henry VIII. His wish was the law of the land, and none durst, on peril of his life, to demur. Enraged at the Pope, who would not sanction his unreasonable divorce from Catherine, he declared England free from papal jurisdiction, and announced himself as head of the English branch of the Catholic Church. Though nothing could have been farther from the King's intention, this was the first step toward Protestantism. He was a zealous Catholic; he had written with his own hand bitter attacks upon Luther, and he had received from the Pope as a reward for his zeal the title, Defender of the Faith. But the first step taken in anger made others inevitable. Those who still recognized the Pope must be punished. The noblest heads in England rolled in the dust. Even Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher could not avoid the fury of the great despot. Nearly all the monasteries of England were destroyed and all ecclesiastical representatives were removed from Parliament. Calling himself a Catholic, Henry persecuted and crippled the Catholic Church as if he were a fanatical Protestant.

But Henry's tyranny was only the external cause of the Reformation. Had the masses of the English people been Catholic at heart no amount of persecution could have changed the ancient Church. The Protestant uprising was in reality the logical outcome of a long series of causes; it was the bursting out of a flame that had been smoldering and spreading for generations; and the rage of the King only precipitated what was bound to come sooner or later. A revolution to succeed must be carried by the masses. Its ideals must be on the plane

of their experience; must appeal powerfully to their sense of right and wrong. Wyclif had understood this thoroughly. His poor priests with their humble, sincere lives and their plain sermons to common people, had carried a spark into every hamlet of England, and but for vigorous and timely action on the part of the government the flames of revolt would quickly have passed beyond control. They had been stamped out with unspeakable ferocity, but in nooks and corners of the land there smoldered embers of the old fire. The new learning was as revolutionary in many of its ideals as were the dreams of the Lollards, but its disciples studiously avoided the masses. They realized the condition of the Church as keenly as did Luther, but they would cleanse it by different methods. They believed that reform should come without violence; that the tranquil spread of knowledge and the gradual enlightenment of the human conscience would in time remedy all evils. To remove the more glaring abuses a Church council should be called. They preached against these abuses, they insisted upon an open Bible and a rational interpretation of it. Erasmus even declared that "the sacred Scriptures should be read by the unlearned, translated into their vulgar tongue." In all this they were on common ground with the Lollards and with Luther, and their work fanned the embers so long hidden in English hearts. But, while agreeing with Luther as to the disease, the Oxford school differed radically with him as to the remedy. Luther was for wrenching up violently the old religious system, rooted as it was by a thousand years of growth, and substituting for it another system, fully as arbitrary, but as yet unsullied by use. "The school of the

new learning," says Crofts, "was too literary, too largely human to seek refuge in one dogma in order to refute another." Thus the two factions who were aiming with all their soul at the same object, were fighting each other as enemies.

Luther, however, had from the first used the methods of Wyclif; he had appealed to the people, and the new learning in England, while it aimed to educate first the ruling classes, had unconsciously taught the masses to comprehend more fully the ideals of the great German Reformer. It had opened their eyes. It had cleared away the century-old weeds and the people saw as they had never seen before. To the uneducated the evolution into goodness preached by Erasmus was incomprehensible, but they quickly understood the "justification by faith" of Luther. His dogmas delighted them; it offered them something tangible to which they might cling. The new learning had thoroughly awakened the nation. In the words of Ten Brink, "The religious agitation of the century had found in England its spiritual center." It needed but the common sense of Tyndale to bridge the gulf between Erasmus and Luther, and the rude hand of Henry VIII. to give the final shock, to set in motion a power that nothing could withstand.

The Spirit of the Age. The great movement was far more than a mere change from one ecclesiastical basis to another. It opened a new world to the national view. More's Utopian dream of a land where the people dared to think for themselves, where every man might worship as he would, and where toleration and independence were the mainsprings of action, became for the first time an accomplished fact. It was an era of education such as

the world had never before seen. Along the whole horizon the black clouds that so long had shadowed Europe were breaking and scattering, and even the dullest peasant could not fail to realize the momentous change. The monasteries, which for a thousand years had been the central object in every English landscape, which held in their grasp one-fifth of the richest land of the kingdom, and which were regarded by the nation at large as an institution as permanent as the throne itself, had been swept utterly away in a moment. The Roman Catholic Church, a system as ancient as the very government and seemingly as stable, had been destroyed at a word; the King had defied the Pope and was ruling in his stead. Protestantism was actually making progress against the Church, entrenched as it was by the workers of fourteen centuries, and impressed on the imagination of men as nothing else has been in human history, save the Empire of Rome itself. To the slow-thinking Englishman it was a most tremendous object lesson. The very foundations of the world seemed to be tottering.

Every realm of human activity was being shaken to its center. The age of manuscript had come suddenly to an end with the invention of paper and the printing press; navigation had entered upon a new era with the mariner's compass; the feudal system with its castles and armor had become archaic with the boom of the first cannon.

1492. Columbus.
1497. Cabot Discovers North America.
1498. Da Gama Rounds Africa.
1500. The Copernican Theory.
1517. The Reformation in Germany.

Within a single generation the New World was discovered by Columbus, India was reached by rounding Africa, the nature of the solar system was demonstrated by Copernicus, and the Reformation was opened by Luther. Men

began to look away from their narrow surroundings into a broader world that stirred their imaginations and awakened their activities; they began to think for themselves and to breathe aloud their thoughts. Science in its modern sense arose; commerce began to flourish; daring spirits pushed into new lands and came back with stories that quickened the pulse of Europe and the world. The modern era had begun.

1520. Magellan Rounds the Globe.
1521. Cortez Conquers Mexico.
1531. Pizarro Subjugates Peru.
1541. Discovery of the Mississippi.

Tudor England. (**Froude,** *History of England;* **Moberly,** *Early Tudors,* and **Creighton,** *Age of Elizabeth* (Epoch Series); **Bright,** *History of England,* Vol. ii.; **Gairdner,** *Henry VII.,* and **Beesly,** *Queen Elizabeth.*)

The century after the accession of Henry VII. was thus an era of swift change, of fierce struggle, of darkness and unrest. "England lay between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born." It was an era of intense mental strain. Men's hearts were ever full of fear; their minds were racked with religious controversy. There were times when no man could feel himself safe, when it was as dangerous to say too little as to say too much. There were times when the people day after day saw relatives and friends breathing out their lives in agony amid the burning fagots. There were times when the king was an absolute tyrant, and the most barefaced injustice must be suffered in silence. And there came a time when the land was rent into two warring nations, and its independence was openly surrendered to Spain.

But beneath the plowshare that was thus rending England there were germs that were destined to spring up

and transform the nation. In 1510 Colet had founded at his own expense a school where classic Latin and Greek should be taught after the new methods to deserving boys, thus laying the foundations for "that system of middle-class education which before the close of the century had changed the very face of England." The very violence and despotism of the king were in the end to benefit the nation. The government was consolidated and centralized. Peace and war were now in the hands of the sovereign, and with his kingdom an obedient unit before him he could engage in international politics. Under the two Henrys England took a leading place among the nations of Europe, and she gained a new conception of her own power and destiny. She was no longer to be an isolated nation viewing with unconcern the doings of the rest of the world. It was to be her work to break down the ancient barriers of the Channel. To compete with Spain and Italy and Holland she must look to the sea. Whatever their faults, it was the early Tudors who taught England the secret of her strength, for they gave to the nation her first navy in the modern sense of the word. The discovery of America put new life into English mariners and opened another Age of the Vikings. Eager English crews were soon racing across the Atlantic to win new lands for their king. Commerce sprang up on every sea. The docks of London and Dartmouth, Southampton and Hull, were thronged with ships laden with far-borne riches. England became a new being under the touch of material prosperity; her intellectual life was broadened with the increase of her geographical horizon. It needed but the hand of a wise and tolerant sovereign to make her the leader of Europe, not

only in things material, but in intellectual and spiritual freedom, in literature and scholarship.

SUGGESTED READINGS. Scott, *Marmion* (1513), and *Lady of the Lake*; Shakespeare, *Henry VIII.*; Mühlbach, *Henry VIII. and His Court;* Boker, *Anne Boleyn* (drama); Ainsworth, *Windsor Castle* and *Tower Hill* (1538); Mrs. Manning, *Household of Sir Thomas More;* Mark Twain, *The Prince and the Pauper;* Mrs. Oliphant, *Magdalen Hepburn.*

CHAPTER XIII

THE RENAISSANCE OF ENGLISH PROSE

The English Tongue. At the opening of the sixteenth century " the powerful old Anglo-Saxon had fairly conquered all the foreign elements into its own idiom." The language stood substantially complete, ready for the great masters who so soon were to make it the medium for their work. As we have seen, it had not won its place without a struggle. " For four hundred years," says Sidney Lanier, " that is, in round numbers, from 670 to 1070—the English language was desperately striving to get into literature, against the sacred wishes of Latin; and now, when the Normans come, the tongue of Aldhelm and Cædmon, Ælfred and Ælfric and Cynewulf, must begin and fight again for another four hundred years against French." The fight was still fierce in Chaucer's day. Langland and Gower had represented the extremes; Chaucer had taken middle ground with a leaning more and more towards his native tongue. With the destruction of the baron class the followers of Langland grew gradually in power, until when Henry VIII. had destroyed the monasteries, the last lurking-place of mediævalism, and established the grammar schools conducted in the vernacular, the triumph of the language was complete.

The Birth of Prose. The strength and brightness of the old tongue were never more manifest than at the

moment of its victory. It recorded its triumph in prose. Between the *Morte d'Arthur* and the King James version of the Bible—or between the years 1470 and 1611—was the formative era of English prose. It began with the vigorous and picturesque creations of men with a message; men who wrote from their heart and soul. Never before had there been such strong and vivacious English, never afterwards has there been such manly, idiomatic prose,—poured out without a thought of art. The beginnings of this vigorous prose arose from the very nature of the times. It was a period of plain and earnest preaching, made simple and clear for the ears of the masses. Great reformers like Cranmer and Latimer and Tyndale, burning with their message, gave it forth in words that went straight to the understanding of every peasant. The whole trend of the period was in the direction of the people. Even the enthusiasts of the new learning forgot their classic models when they used their mother tongue. "Colet," says Erasmus, "labored to improve his English style by the diligent perusal and study of Chaucer and the other old poets." Even the scholars yielded to the current. The learned Ascham in his *Toxophilus*, published in 1545, advised his readers "to speak as the common people do, to think as the wise men do"; and Wilson, in his *Art of Rhetoric*, written eight years later, declared that "writers ought to speak as is commonly received, . . . to speak plainly and nakedly after the common sort of men, in few words." The Italian Renaissance quickened in due time and fructified English poetry, but its effect at first was to emasculate the sturdy old English prose.

The chief prose writers after Malory and before Lyly

and Hooker were Sir Thomas More, Roger Ascham, and William Tyndale.

1. Sir Thomas More (1485–1535)

Authorities. The *Life of More* by **Roper,** his son-in-law (prefixed to the Pitt Press Edition of the *Utopia*), is the basis of all subsequent biographies; the correspondence of Erasmus adds much valuable material. The most recent Life is that by **J. Coller Monson.** Other excellent authorities are **Froude's** and **Green's** histories of England, **Bridgett,** *Life of More*, and **Seebohm,** *Oxford Reformers.* For additional references, see **Welsh,** *English Masterpiece Course.*

On its political and social side the new learning centered about Thomas More, under-sheriff of London, royal ambassador to France, courtier of King Henry VIII., and successor of the great Wolsey as Lord Chancellor of England. In early life he had come in contact with Grocyn and Linacre, and though his father, to whom Greek was synonymous with heresy, had removed him from Oxford on the first suspicion of contagion and had set him to studying law, the young scholar had caught a full breath of the Renaissance enthusiasm. A little later he made the acquaintance of Colet and Erasmus and was soon again in the full tide of the new learning. His progress was marvelous. His home became at length the rallying-place of the new movement,—the focal point of English culture. But his early training in the law, which had been made broad and severe by his practical father, turned him into the tide of public life, and step by step, almost against his will, he was led upward till he stood for a time the leading statesman of England.

The picture of More left by his contemporaries is a

singularly fascinating one. "He is the one genius of England," declared Dean Colet, and this estimate, warmly seconded by Erasmus, was shared by all who ever met him. Seldom has any age produced a nature more magnetic and lovable. Erasmus and Colet never addressed him save with endearing epithets. His jovial humor and his quick wit have become proverbial. He held his powers at instant command, and none of his generation, not even Erasmus, could withstand him in argument. But he was by no means a perfect character. Like the age in which he lived, he was a contradiction; the gentlest of men, he could personally superintend the torture of a heretic. No one was ever more genial and optimistic, yet beneath the jovial exterior he lived a life as stern and ascetic as any Carthusian. For spiritual discipline he wore all his life long an "inner sharp shirt of hair," and subjected himself continually to severe penances. No man in all that singular age, save Erasmus, perhaps seems to have been perfectly sane on religious topics. More, so far ahead of his generation at almost every point, lost utterly his self-control when the argument drifted toward theology; his prose, usually so measured and eloquent, descends almost to the level of rant when he uses it for religious controversy.

Utopia. Along social and political lines More was the sanest and most far-seeing of men. His *Utopia*, written in Latin and not published until after his death, stands as the handbook of the new learning. It is the dream of the Oxford reformers. Utopia (from two Greek words meaning No Land) is but the island of Britain; its great river spanned by the massive bridge is the Thames; the city lying four-square upon this stream is London; and

the government and the laws and the people are those of England, transformed by the evolution of culture. The vital part of the work is the second book; it was written first, and the rest was but an afterthought. Let us examine for a moment this ideal England, that we may learn the dreams of the English Renaissance.

The government of Utopia is democratic; representatives of the people have power to elect and to depose the king, and the legislative branch is a constant check upon his actions. Absolutism and oppression of the poor are impossible. The Utopians have but few laws and they "utterlie exclude and banishe" all attorneys and sergeants of the law. There is no unproductive class, for all must learn some useful labor and pursue it for six hours every day. All classes, high and low, "in their childhode be instructe in learninge." And "the better parte of the people, bothe men and women throughe oute all their whole lyffe doo bestowe in learninge those spare houres, which we sayde they have vacante from bodelye laboures." "They be taughte learninge in theire owne natyve tong." Early in the morning, before the day's labor begins, "a great multitude of every sort of people, both men and women, go to heare lectures, some one and some an other, as everye mans nayure is inclined." "In the exercise and studie of the mind they be never wery."

"Warre or battel as a thing very beastly, and yet to no kinde of beastes in so muche use as to man, they do detest and abhorre." They are merciful and piteous. How un-English indeed is their opinion of hunting, for they count it "the lowest, vyleste and moste abjecte part of boucherie." "Yf the hope of slaughter and the expectation of tearynge in peces the beaste doth please

thee," writes More, a whole millennium ahead of his generation, "thou shouldest rather be moved with pitie to see a selye innocente hare murdered of a dogge, the weake of the stronger, the fearfull of the fearce, the innocente of the cruell and unmercyfull." And again "they marveyle that any men be so folyshe as to have delite and pleasure in the doubtful glisteringe of a lytil tryffelynge stone, or that anye man is madde as to count himselfe the nobler for the smaller or fyner threde of wolle, which selfe same wol a shepe did ones weare." "By al meanes possible thei procure to have golde and silver among them in reproche and infamie." They were a tolerant people, "for this is one of the auncientest lawes amonge them, that no man shall be blamed for resoninge in the maintenaunce of his owne religion," and "they consider it a point of arrogant presumption to compell all other by violence and threateninges to agre to the same that thou belevest to be trew." "These and such like opinions," declares More, "have they conceaved, partely by education, and partely by good litterature and learning,"—and thus we might read on and on until the whole dream of the new learning stood complete before us. It is a magnificent structure. To More's century it was a castle in the clouds, beautiful but impossible; we of a later century can see that it was a prophecy. Much of it is still beyond us; but its wildest dreams have long ago become commonplace achievements.

If the second book is the bright side,—the picture of what England might become,—the first book is the dark side, the picture of the actual England of More's day. Never was there a sharper contrast. It is a series of vivid pictures taken by flashlight in the dark corners of a

dark age. A quarto history of the times could make no clearer impression. The misery of the peasants whose farms had been seized for sheep pastures; the struggle with heavy taxes; the frightful punishments; the wholesale use of the death penalty for the most trivial offenses; the cruelty of the disbanded soldiery; the corruption in Church and State,—all this stands out sharp and clear as if etched by acid.

Consistent with his ideal that all reform should be from the top downward, More wrote the *Utopia* in Latin that it might not inflame the common people; but the work must not be dismissed as a mere piece of Latin literature. It is the one document which embodies the whole of a great epoch in the nation's spiritual life, and though by mere accident it uses another medium than the national tongue, it is English and only English. It is reckoned the world over as one of the few great English classics. Moreover it has never traveled in Latin dress, for the world knows it only in its first translation, the English version made in 1551 by Ralph Robinson.

The style and literary art of the *Utopia* may be discussed in spite of its Latin. The tale is told with skill. The author's whole energy seems to be bent on making real to us the ideal land of which he has heard. To make it clearer he brings in illustrations, seemingly unpremeditated, from the English life of his own day, discussing freely its abuses, its evil laws, its national crimes. Only at length does it dawn upon the reader that the application to England is the central purpose of the book, and that the imaginary Utopia is but a skilful device to hide his design and yet at the same time to emphasize his lesson. The author is responsible for nothing. He

is but the hand that records the tale. He represents himself as opposing many of the ideals presented by the imaginary traveler, and he puts all the criticisms of existing systems into other mouths than his own. The device gave him a wonderful freedom. Never before had one so near the nation's heart poured out his full soul on topics religious, political, and social. Besides its dramatic setting the work has other conspicuous literary merits. In it we find the earliest germs of the modern English novel. The narrative moves rapidly and naturally; the characters are not puppets but living men; the humor is fresh despite the lapse of centuries, and the descriptions are terse and vivid. An artist could fill a sketch-book with Utopian landscapes and portraits.

More's English Work. More used the Latin for his *Utopia* only as a safeguard. Despite his deep scholarship, he preferred his native tongue as a literary medium. The volume of his English work is considerable. Besides his familiar letters, a charming series, and his controversial writings, imperious and often ill-considered, he was the author of two short histories: the *Life of Richard III.*, an unfinished work adapted from an older original; and the *Life of Edward V.*, called by Craik "the first English composition that can be said to aspire to be more than a mere chronicle," and declared by Green, who only echoes Hallam, to be "the first book in which what we may call modern English prose appears, written with purity and clearness of style and a freedom either from antiquated forms of expression or classical pedantry." As authorities these histories have great weight, so competent a judge even as Hume declaring them well-nigh as valuable as original documents. With them the

modern era of English historical writing may be said to open.

As the chief exponent, then, of the new learning in England, as its mouthpiece and interpreter, and as the author of the earliest vernacular English history not a mere chronicle, More stands as the leading literary figure of his era. He had all the elements of literary greatness. Had he been born in a more happy age, had it been his lot to join the circle of which Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were the soul, he might have become one of the supreme masters of our English tongue.

REQUIRED READING. *Utopia* (Pitt Press Edition), Book i., and the description of Utopia, and "Of the Religions in Utopia," Book ii.

2. *Roger Ascham (1515–1586)*

Old Ascham is one of the freshest, truest spirits I have ever met with; a scholar and writer, yet a genuine man.—*Carlyle.*

Authorities. **Arber**, Edition of *The Scholemaster* and *Toxophilus* (English Reprints); **Croft**, *English Literature;* **Quick**, *Educational Reformers.* Ascham's complete works in four volumes are included in the Library of Old Authors.

The attitude of the new learning toward popular education has already been noted. It scattered grammar schools over all England, and, what is more, it insisted on a break from ancient methods. With Colet pedagogy became for the first time in England a distinct and honored profession. The training of boys had been regarded as mean and low: Colet engaged as the first master of St. Paul's the celebrated scholar Lily, paying him a salary that a courtier might envy. The methods in

vogue had been unnatural, and hard even to the verge of cruelty: Colet insisted upon new text-books whose central aim should be simplicity and naturalness. Discipline had been maintained by brutal floggings: Colet ruled his school with gentleness and love. In the preface to the famous text-book known to two centuries of schoolboys as Lily's Latin Grammar, though in reality the inception and general plan of the work belonged to Colet and Erasmus, Colet pours out his full heart:

> In this little book I have left many things out on purpose, considering the tenderness and capacity of young minds. . . . Wherefore I pray you all, little babes, all little children, learn gladly this little treatise and commend it diligently unto your memories, trusting of this beginning ye shall proceed and grow to perfect literature, and come at last to be great clerks. And lift up your little white hands for me, which prayeth for you to God, to whom be all honor and imperial majesty and glory.

Such were the ideals of the new pedagogy, but their full import came slowly to the popular mind; indeed, not until our own day have they come into general use. It was not, however, for lack of plain statement, for a disciple of Colet, Roger Ascham, the last of the English humanists, a man who had caught his enthusiasm in the days when the glory of the first Italian Renaissance was as yet undimmed, gathered up these ideals and molded them into a complete and permanent system, comprehensible even by the popular mind. *The Scholemaster* was the handbook of the new pedagogy. It was the dream of the new learning along educational lines, even as the *Utopia* had been along social and political, and as such it must be reckoned with as one of the great books of the era.

The life of Ascham takes us into the second generation

of humanists and leads to an investigation of the half-century following the death of Colet. Cambridge University had become the intellectual center of England, and St. John's College, dominated by the master minds of John Cheke and John Redman, was the soul of Cambridge. Here Ascham spent his youth and young manhood. Everywhere in his works he extols his two masters, who seemed to him the fountainhead of all "excellency in learnyng, of godnes in liuyng, of diligence in studying, of councell in exhorting, of good order in all thyng, [who] did breed vp so many learned men in that one College of S. Johns, at one time, as I beleue, the whole vniuersitie of Louaine, in many yeares was neuer able to affourd." The intellectual life of England during the middle of the century centers about this college. The greatest service, however, done by the St. John's group of scholars was their insisting, as the earlier humanists had done, upon the English tongue as the literary medium. Cheke was steadfast in his insistence that "our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, vnmixt and vnmangled with borowing of other tunges"; and Ascham, though he recognized that the vernacular was often unrefined and harsh compared with the classic languages, insisted upon its use, even in poetry, for although hexameters "rather trot and hoble, than run smoothly in our English tung, yet I am sure, our English tung will receive carmen Iambicum as naturally as either Greke or Latin." His own practice attests his sincerity, for although he was the master scholar of his day, he wrote his best works in English prose, and he even made heroic attempts at English verse.

The story of Ascham's life, like that of all other schoolmasters, is quickly told. He was connected with

Cambridge for nearly forty years, and the remainder of his long life was passed at court, chiefly as private tutor of Queen Elizabeth. His most important works are his *Toxophilus*, or Lover of the Bow, a treatise on archery, and *The Scholemaster*, not published until after his death.

The Scholemaster. The *Toxophilus* is a manly book: "English matter, in the English tung, for English men." Ascham would have the old national weapon restored to general use that the young might be trained in the vigorous school of the old yeomen. Physical culture was to be the basis of all sound education; the mediæval idea "that the soul shone more brightly and purely in a thin and emaciated body, looking out of sunken and hollow eyes" was to him the acme of absurdity. *Toxophilus* is in reality an introduction to the more important work, *The Scholemaster*, whose aim it was to show the simple and rational laws that underlie all education. Teaching is a profession, he insists, more vital than almost any other, yet few regard it so.

> It is pitie, that commonly, more care is had, yea and that emonges verie wise men, to finde out rather a cunnynge man for their horse, than a cunnynge man for their children. For, to the one, they will gladlie giue a stipend of 200 Crounes by yeare, and loth to offer to the other, 200 shillinges. God, that sitteth in heauen laugheth their choice to skorne, and rewardeth their liberalitie as it should: for he suffereth them to haue tame and well ordered horse, but wilde and vnfortunate Children.

He finds the methods of teaching deplorably at fault. The languages are taught, not in a natural way, but by a process that even the brightest pupil can scarcely comprehend; and the dull are flogged for their stupidity. "Many scholemasters, as I have seen, when they meet with a hard witted scholer, they rather breake him, than

bowe him, rather marre him, than mend him." In his opinion, "loue is fitter thaen feare, ientlenes better than beating, to bring vp a childe rightlie in learninge." "If your scholer do misse sometimes, chide not hastelie: For that shall both dull his witte, and discorage his diligence: but monish him gentelie: which shall make him, both willing to amende, and glad to go forward in loue and hope of learning." "Learninge shold be alwaise mingled, with honest mirthe, and cumlie exercise." He scores the schoolmen roundly at every turn. "They were always learning, and little profiting"; "their whole knowledge was tied only to their tong and lips, and neuer ascended vp to the braine and head." Ascham would commence with simple exercises in the natural way, teaching the pupil to think for himself; leading him on and on by ingenious methods, which he describes at length, to perfect mastery. As an example of what his system can accomplish he points triumphantly to his pupil, Queen Elizabeth, who "goes beyond you all in excellencie of learnyng, and knowledge of divers tonges," and "whose onely example, if the rest of our nobilitie would folow, than might England be, for learning and wisedome in nobilitie, a spectacle to all the world beside." Truly the book contains, as Dr. Johnson well said, "the best advice that was ever given for the study of the languages."

To enter Ascham's "little scholehouse" after having visited the halls of the schoolmen is like stepping from the dim mediæval monastery into the full blaze of the nineteenth century. Even to-day the book may be read with delight. Its prose is vigorous and flexible. Its author is deeply in earnest; at times, as when he condemns the

new influences that were creeping in from Italy, he writes impetuously and with heat. He wanders constantly into wide fields, and never is he more delightful than when on such digressions. He never loses himself; ever and anon he returns to the "little scholehouse" for a fresh start. "But, to cum downe, from greate men, and heir matters, to my litle children, and poore scholehouse againe, I will, God willing, go forward orderlie, as I purposed." His figures are most delightful; they seem to flow spontaneously from his daily life. "Therefore thou, that shotest at perfection in the Latin tong, think not thyselfe wiser than Tullie was;" and again, "I have bene a looker on in the Cokpit of learning thies many yeares" ;—and so we might go on and on.

This, then, was Roger Ascham, "the strong, plain Englishman of Henry's day, with his love for all field sports and for cock-fighting, his warm generous heart, his tolerant spirit, his thorough scholarship, his beautiful penmanship: a man to be loved and honored."—*Arber.*

REQUIRED READING. Ascham, *Scholemaster*, Book i., Arber's Edition.

Other Writers. In the seventy years between the *Utopia* and *The Scholemaster* a whole new school of prose writers had arisen. Lord Berners had made his masterly translation of Froissart's *Chronicles*, identifying himself so thoroughly with the spirit of the old master, and expressing himself in such strong, simple, and idiomatic English that the work became well-nigh a new creation; George Cavendish had written his lively and interesting *Life of Wolsey;* and Wilson, "our earliest academic critic," had put forth his *Art of Rhetoric.* English prose

had made a strong beginning; and the English language, that could serve as a medium for work so finished and flexible, was no longer to be used with hesitation and misgivings.

3. William Tyndale (1484–1536)

Authorities. **Deman,** *William Tyndale*, London, 1871; **Ten Brink,** *English Literature;* **Marsh,** *Lectures on the English Language;* **Froude,** *History of England; An Apology for Tindale*, 1535, Arber's Edition.

The representative of the new learning on its popular side was William Tyndale, a native of the Welsh border, a man from the middle classes, a latter-day Langland. Educated at Oxford, where he came under the influence of Colet, and later at Cambridge, where there still lingered the spell of Erasmus, he had eagerly absorbed all that was best in the new learning. He had delighted in Colet, to whom Greek was but the key to the truth in the Holy Scriptures, and he had translated with enthusiasm the *Enchiridion* of Erasmus, that handbook of handbooks for earnest men, and "in the school of the great Dutchman," says Ten Brink, "he became ripe for Luther's doctrine. Owing to the preëminently practical bent of his mind, he was less clearly conscious of the differences that existed between these two teachers, than he was of the principles upon which they agreed." He rejected utterly the dreams of the new learning. More would raise his generation to higher levels by pointing to an ideal world in the clouds; Erasmus would lift it up by sheer intellectual culture; Tyndale, with sturdy common sense, would accomplish it by turning to a world of which Erasmus and More knew nothing. Like Langland two centuries before, he saw the heart of the difficulty: who-

ever would touch England must touch the common people. Their cries were ever in his ears, and to him they came as the very voice of God. The masses—poor, ignorant, oppressed—must be enlightened; they must have the truth, and what fountain of truth was there but the Holy Scriptures? His resolution was quickly made. "If God spare my life," he declared to a learned prelate, "ere many years I will cause a boy that drivest the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost." From that moment, though exiled forever from the land of his birth, hunted from city to city, and threatened every day of his life with imminent torture and death, he held inflexibly to his great purpose, nor did the bitter hate of Henry and Wolsey and More overtake him till his work was well-nigh done.

The first part of Tyndale's Bible was published at Worms in 1525, and other parts followed from time to time. They were brought secretly in great quantities into England, where they raised a tempest of opposition. Sir Thomas More launched against them seven volumes of controversy. "Our Saviour will say to Tyndale," he cried, "'Thou art accursed, Tyndale; the son of the devil; for neither flesh nor blood hath taught thee these heresies but thine own father, the devil, that is in Hell.'" Mild, gentle Thomas More! Tyndale on his side kept up a vigorous warfare. In his answer to More, in his doctrinal treatises, in his introductions to different portions of the Scriptures, and in his expositions and notes, he made his position perfectly clear, and his works, in spite of opposition and denunciation, in spite of wholesale burnings, spread rapidly over England. The common people bought them eagerly and read them as the very words

of God. Opposition only fanned the flames; soon nothing could stay their headlong fury.

Tyndale's Bible, aside from its influence upon the nation's spiritual life, is still one of the most notable books in the whole range of English literature. Wyclif's translation was from the Vulgate, and it was not printed until our own century; Tyndale made his translation of the New Testament from the Greek text of Erasmus, thus making the first English version from the original. From the very first it was circulated over all England in countless editions.

Tyndale's translation of the New Testament [says Marsh in an oft-quoted passage] is the most important philological monument of the first half of the sixteenth century, perhaps I should say of the whole period between Chaucer and Shakespeare, both as a historical relic and as having more than anything else contributed to shape and fix the sacred dialect, and establish the form which the Bible must permanently assume in an English dress. The best features of the translation of 1611 are derived from the version of Tyndale, and thus that remarkable work has exerted, directly and indirectly, a more powerful influence on the English language than any other single production between the ages of Richard II. and Queen Elizabeth.

And Edmund Gosse well declares that

the introduction into every English household of the Bible, translated into prose of this fluid, vivid period, is, after all, by far the most important literary fact of the reign of Henry VIII. It colored the entire complexion of subsequent English prose, and set up a kind of typical harmony in the construction and arrangement of sentences.

To show how closely the King James version followed the earlier translation, let us examine Tyndale's rendering of the Lord's Prayer:

Oure Father which arte in heven, halowed be thy name. Let thy kingdom come. Thy wyll be fulfilled, as well in erth, as hit ys in heven. Geve

vs this daye oure dayly breade. And forgeve vs oure treaspases, even as we forgeve them which treaspas vs. Leede vs not into temptacion, but delyvre vs from yvell. Amen.

While Tyndale was thus struggling in exile and danger to make a Bible for his people, other reformers were laboring as earnestly at home, and the most eloquent and fearless of them all was HUGH LATIMER, a man who had struggled from the little farm where his father "had walk for a hundred shepe, and his mother mylked xxx kyne," to the position of Bishop of Worcester and preacher to the king. His success had come from his fearlessness that hesitated not a moment to speak all that was in his heart, were it even to the king himself; and from his brilliant though homely style of preaching. He was as quick and witty as Thomas More himself; he saw the humor of things, and he dared to draw illustrations from the homely life about him. He was startlingly original: there is a constant element of surprise in his words. "Who is the most diligentest bishop and prelate in all England," he demanded in one of his sermons before King Edward, "that passeth all the rest in doing his office? I can tell you, for I know him who it is; I know him well. It is the Devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all other; he is never out of his diocese; he is never from his cure; ye shall never find him unoccupied; call for him when you will, he is ever at home." Such preaching caught the multitude; the manly, courageous tone of the speaker, his intense earnestness, and his solemn message straight from the heart made a most powerful impression.

Much of the prose of the era was thus simple and strong. Its writers were terribly in earnest.

They are entirely occupied [says Crofts] with what they are going to say: they are filled with ideas that are new and striking to them, and which they pour out garrulously and diffusely: they have no conception of the selection and arrangement of thought with a view to bringing out a point: still less have they the idea of studying the proportion of thoughts and the harmony of words with a view to style. Only very faintly can be perceived in their works the beginnings of that self-control and self-criticism in thought and style which mark the great thinker and artist. This is one of the last gifts of culture. The Renaissance had to give first an impetus to thought by stimulating interest in the ideas of others, before it could influence in the direction of study of expression, and could lastly encourage that harmony of thought and expression which makes art. The works of the new learning mark the first phase, the works of the Euphuists and the courtly Makers the second, and the last includes the productions of the most glorious Elizabethan period, its poems, its dramas, its beginnings of fine prose writing in the works of Hooker and Bacon.

REQUIRED READING. Tyndale's Eighth Chapter of Matthew, in Marsh, *Origin and History of the English Language;* selections from Tyndale in Craik, *English Prose;* Latimer, *The Ploughers*, Arber's Edition; selections from Latimer in Craik, *English Prose.*

CHAPTER XIV

THE DAWN OF LYRIC POETRY

1557–1579

FROM "TOTTEL'S MISCELLANY" TO THE "SHEPHEARDES CALENDER"

THE first-fruits of the Renaissance in Italy had been a quick awakening of the spirit of art, a new birth in painting and poetry, in architecture and sculpture, in the domain of mere beauty. The English Renaissance had worked along far different lines. The message from the East, which the quick Latin mind had received at a flash, came slowly to the Teuton. He must measure it by the standards of practical value, and he must look carefully to its bearings upon his religion. In both respects it brought to him new light, and he stopped to question it no more. Grocyn and Linacre and Colet could live for months and years in the glorious Italy of Lorenzo the Magnificent, of Raphael and Michel Angelo, of Tasso and Ariosto, and go home without a thought of art, of poetry, of beauty—radiant only with the dream of a new religion, of a new method of Scripture interpretation; and the new learning could voice itself only in prose,—a new prose it is true, enlarged, enriched, revivified, but yet prose. English poetry still droned on as it had done during all the years since Chaucer laid down his pen; a touch of true poetry there was in the homes of the peas-

ants, where the homely old ballads, survivals of the Anglo-Saxon minstrelsy, were still making, but in court and hall mediæval tradition held full sway.

As one wanders through the dreary verse of the era, all of it modeled after obsolete French forms or after the ancient Chaucer,—for two centuries the only English classic; as one drives himself through the great mass of "droning narratives and worn-out rhymes"; through the two volumes of Skelton,—wild and erratic, a startling variation and yet but a variation; through the "inane repetition of Hawes," and the more original settings of the Scottish poets, he comes to a time when suddenly without warning the whole chorus changes. Instead of the mediæval epic of six thousand lines, there comes all at once the lyric of passion, short and intense; instead of the threadbare verse-forms,—the Chaucerian measures or the Skeltonian variations,—there comes as by magic a flood of Italian and French forms: the sonnet, terza rima, the rondeau, and blank verse. It seems like a revolution. From the moment that Wyatt and Surrey struck the new key, all the gay ones of England were tripping to the Italian music: the era of modern lyric poetry had opened in England.

The Reasons for the Sudden Change rest largely on conjecture. The new education, the rise of the grammar schools, had stirred up all classes. Noblemen became anxious about the education of their sons, and the fashion of sending them abroad for the finishing touches was revived. It became the custom for all university graduates who could afford the expense to complete their education on the continent. It is certain that before the middle of the century many educated Englishmen were wandering

into Italy and, unlike Colet and his school, were becoming enamored of its gay and brilliant life. Old Ascham in *The Scholemaster* sounds a note of warning. "I am affraide," he sighs, "that ouer many of our travelers into Italie, do not eschewe the way to Circes Court." There was a new influx of Italian literature. Every shop in London, according to Ascham, was full of "bookes, of late translated out of Italian into English." The younger educated class was becoming Italianated, and the change was not at all for the better. Young men came home from Italy despisers of religion, of morals, of the true spirit of learning. "An Italianated Englishman," cried the old schoolmaster, "is the devil incarnate . . . They mock the Pope: they raile on Luther: They like none but only themselves."

Tottel's Miscellany. With this band of gay young worldlings, children of a most brilliant and dissolute court, did the new prosody come into England.

> In the latter end of Henry the Eighth's reign [writes Puttenham in his *Art of English Poesy*, 1589 (Arber's English Reprints)] sprung up a new company of Courtly Makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder, and Henry Earl of Surrey, were the two chieftains, who having travelled into Italy, and there tasted the sweet and stately measures and style of the Italian poesie, as novices newly crept out of the schools of Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesie.

The new school touched only a handful compared with the great mass of the people, but it changed in a twinkling the music in court circles, and it influenced in time the poetic pitch of the entire nation. At first the poetry was anonymous. "The poets of that age," remarks Edward Arber, "wrote for their own delectation and for

that of their friends, and not for the general public. They generally had the greatest aversion to their works appearing in print." The new movement was at first, therefore, extremely restricted, but in 1557, after the death of Wyatt and Surrey, there was published by Richard Tottel, under the title, *Songes and Sonettes vvritten by the right Honourable Lorde Henry Howard, Late Earle of Surrey, and other*, a collection of the best work, not only of Surrey, but of Wyatt and Grimald and other leaders of the new school. This was the first English anthology, and it stands as a milestone in the history of English poetry. "To haue wel written in verse, yea and in small parcelles deserueth great praise," wrote Tottel in his address to the reader, and "our tong is able in that kynde to do as praiseworthy as ye rest." Little did he dream that his little collection was to mark an epoch; that English poetry "in small parcelles"—lyric poetry—was soon to be reckoned as one of the glories of his native tongue.

1. Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)

Authorities. **Simonds,** *Sir Thomas Wyatt and his Poems; Tottel's Miscellany*, Arber's Edition; **Ten Brink,** Vol. ii., Part i.; *Wyatt's Poetical Works*, Aldine Edition. The Riverside Edition in the British Poets Series is practically a reprint of the Aldine.

The life of Sir Thomas Wyatt takes us into the gay court of Henry VIII.; into the very heart of the nation's life during a most vital era. In him we have the typical nobleman of the time. Educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and at Paris, where, Laertes-like, he finished his school career; enrolled at an early age in the gorgeous

throng that fluttered about the great King; entered at length upon a career full of quick changes: now rich in the King's favor,—laughing with him, bandying witticisms and epigrams,—now under the royal frown, in imminent danger of the axe; now the pet of the court ladies, writing sonnets and love songs to Anne Boleyn; now marshal in France, living the rough life of the soldier; now sharing richly in the plunder of the broken monasteries; now starving in the Tower,—such was the life of most nobles in Henry's day.

The records of Wyatt's life are fragmentary, but they are sufficient to give us a full picture of the man: tall and sturdy, full of manly beauty and grace, quick of wit,—the soul of every gathering,—generous and hearty, in youth impulsive even to recklessness, plunging headlong into every wild adventure that had in it a spice of danger or a promise of applause; performing feats of arms in tourney before the King; quelling, at the head of the royal troops, insurrection against the throne; captured in Italy by Spaniards, and held for ransom, and then, with reckless daring, making his escape; flinging himself, while ambassador to Spain, into the very jaws of the Inquisition, and escaping almost by miracle; charged with treason when such a charge was in itself equivalent to death, ignorant of the specific complaints against him, permitted neither to call witnesses and counsel nor to cross-examine his accusers, yet in a single speech utterly confounding his enemies; and at last dying of fever caused by riding too impetuously at the King's bidding,—such was Thomas Wyatt as revealed to us by the fragments of his biography.

When we turn to his written work we find another

phase of his character. Though the child of a most corrupt court, a polished and politic man of the world, wise enough to steer between the policy of Cromwell and the caprice of the King, he was yet an honest and sincere man. No one can read his defense, which was poured from a full heart, his poems, which are free from every trace of indelicacy, or his letters to his son, "which deserve to be inscribed in letters of gold in a conspicuous part of every place of instruction for youth in the world," without a hearty liking for the man and a conviction that at heart he was pure and true.

Few men have seen more of their age. He was sent repeatedly by the King into all the important courts of Europe to keep close watch of measures and men, and he became the best informed man in all England on continental affairs. He knew intimately the languages of Italy and Spain and France; he had come in contact with the Renaissance spirit in all its phases; and he had read thoroughly the new literature that was awakening everywhere in the Romance world. It is not strange that a cosmopolitan so polished should realize keenly the artistic needs of his native land and should attempt to do in his own vernacular tongue what Italy and France and Spain were doing so nobly in theirs.

Wyatt holds his place among the English poets, not so much from the intrinsic merit of his verse, as from the fact that he was the earliest pioneer in a most wonderful region. His creative power was small; his range of subjects was narrow indeed; his sense of rhythm and his ear for rhyme were almost gross. From first to last his songs are echoes and transcripts of Petrarch and the French singers. He affected the Italian poetic fashion. Roman-

tic love had become a disease, and it was the task of the poet to analyze with minuteness all its thousand symptoms and effects. Never before and never since has poetry been so full of " flaming sighs that boil," of " smoking tears," of stony-hearted maidens, of lovers slowly dying of love. " I die, I die," sobs the poet, " and you regard it not." But in Petrarch's minute studies of the love malady there is a daintiness, an exquisiteness of workmanship, a sweet charm, that can be expressed only by the adjective " Petrarchian," and this rare quality Wyatt seldom caught. He wrote carelessly, —it seems as if he had thrown to us the first draft of his song, rough and unfinished, and had turned with vigor to his next task; for there is more than mere lack of ear and skill in his work. What a wrenching of words, what a clashing of rhymes in a quartrain like this:

> Cæsar, when that the traitor of Egypt
> With th' honourable head did him present,
> Covering his heart's gladness, did represent
> Plaint with his tears outward, as it is writ.

Everywhere in Wyatt we find such work as this, and yet ever and anon there comes a line, a stanza, a whole lyric, that thrills us. How delightful in a desert of artificial sighs and tears to come upon such true pathos as that in " Forget not yet," or " Disdain me not," or " And Wilt thou Leave me thus ? " or such manly lines as those in " Most Wretched Heart ":

> What though that curs do fall by kind
> On him that hath the overthrow;
> All that cannot oppress my mind;
> For he is wretched that weens him so.

It reminds us of Hamlet. Such lyrics came from a

serious, contemplative mind, prone to look at the dark side of life; from a man who had lived intensely and suffered deeply.

We need read no farther. When we think of the glorious outburst of Elizabethan song, the halting measures of Wyatt seem poor indeed; but when we compare his work with that which immediately preceded his, it seems like a burst of music from a new world. As the pioneer in a most barren age, as the father of the whole chorus of English lyrists, Wyatt is no mean figure in the history of our literature.

REQUIRED READING. "Forget not yet," "Disdain me not," "And Wilt thou Leave me thus?" "Most Wretched Heart," "Blame not my Lute," Aldine Edition of the British Poets.

2. *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517–1547)*

Authorities. **Dr. Nott,** *Life of Surrey; Tottel's Miscellany,* Arber's Edition; *Surrey's Poetical Works,* Aldine Edition; **Minto,** *Characteristics of the English Poets;* **Ten Brink,** Vol. ii., 2.

"Henry, Earl of Surrey," writes Puttenham, "and Sir Thomas Wyatt, between whom I find very little difference, I repute them for the two chief lanterns of light to all others that have since employed their pens upon English poesie." It is well-nigh certain, however, that Wyatt was the pioneer, and that Surrey received from him his first impulse. Wyatt was fourteen years the elder; he had become enamored of Anne Boleyn before Surrey was sixteen, and he had written her many a song and sonnet, the last of the series being "Whoso List to Hunt?" with its significant lines:

There is written her fair neck round about;
"Noli me tangere; for Cæsar's I am."

If Surrey, who was but twenty-five when Wyatt died, was, as some have maintained, his poetic master, then indeed must he have been a precocious youth. But the young poet acknowledges his indebtedness. He quotes fondly from Wyatt's poems; he declares that his was

A hand that taught what might be said in rhyme,
 That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit.
A mark, the which (imperfected for time)
 Some may approach, but never none shall hit.

Of the sixty poems in his collection, five are eulogies of Wyatt. But the pupil was by far the better poet; his work is a long step away from his master's toward the glorious company of the Elizabethan singers.

Of the greater part of Surrey's short thirty years we know nothing. He was reared in the seclusion of the country; he was educated doubtless by private tutors, and he was taken in due time to the royal court, where he arose but slowly. Unlike the elder poet he was unfitted for diplomatic work; his father was the hero of Flodden, and the son had dreams of a martial life. At length he had his chance. He went with the troops into Scotland and into France. He was a born leader of men; he was rising rapidly, but in an evil hour he fell under the royal displeasure. For reasons that are more or less veiled in mystery he was condemned to the block, and he died, the last victim of the great tyrant.

The materials for a biography are indeed fragmentary, but in many ways they are sufficient. They make clear to us his personality. His temper was hasty and im-

perious; in his own words he was full of "the fury of reckless youth"; he found it hard "to learn how to bridle [his] heady will." He was thrice in prison, once for going at midnight about the city with a boisterous crew, "breaking many glass windows both of houses and churches and shooting at men in the street." He was proud, independent, original; more impetuous than Wyatt, less serious and sincere.

In the externals of his work Surrey far surpassed Wyatt. He was a better workman; his ear for rhythm and rhyme was more sensitive, his hand more skilful. He was more painstaking and accurate. The task for both poets was no light one; the language had never before been poured into the light, dainty mold of the love lyric. Wyatt was more timid,—even in his deepest passion he clung closely to his foreign models; Surrey was too self-confident, too headstrong, long to follow in another's path. He was a leader, imperious and original, and he broke quickly away from his early masters. He was in danger of going to extremes, even to the extreme of "Skeltonian license." He was more gay and trivial than Wyatt. A youth in the twenties, fond of the glitter and the flattery of the court, fond of war, life was to him no very serious thing. His love songs are too extravagant, too impulsive, to be the index of any deep feeling. They trip gracefully and merrily compared with those of his "elder brother in the muse." They have a sweet lilting movement, and a lightness that make some of Wyatt's efforts seem almost grotesque, but they never reach the depth of passion or the intensity of feeling which the elder poet often touched.

External nature, doubtless because of his early asso-

ciations, appealed most strongly to Surrey. His verse is full of green fields and song-birds. What a sweet Chaucerian note in his sonnet on the springtime, beginning

> The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
> With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale.

In Surrey's translation of the second and fourth books of the *Æneid* we find the first English blank verse. As a whole the work possesses no great merit; it is far from being smooth and correct, the meter halts often, and the tale is not seldom commonplace; but here and there are grand lines and passages prophetic of the great days of Shakespeare and Milton, who were to make this instrument the medium of their mighty creations. Such passages as this are not far behind the best Elizabethan efforts:

> As wrestling winds, out of dispersed whirl
> Befight themselves, the west with southern blast,
> And gladsome east proud of Aurora's horse;
> The woods do whiz; and foamy Nereus
> Raging in fury, with three-forked mace
> From bottom's depth doth welter up the seas;
> So came the Greeks.

REQUIRED READINGS. "The Soote Season"; "Wyatt Rested Here"; "Alas! so all Things now"; "From Tuscane Came"; "London! Hast thou Accused me?" Aldine Edition.

The Courtly Makers. Wyatt and Surrey were but the leaders of the school of "courtly makers." Grimald, who was doubtless the editor of *Tottel's Miscellany*, Lord Vaux, Churchyard, Gascoigne, the author of *The Steel Glass*,

1557. Tottel's Miscellany.
1576. The Paradyse of Daynty Devises.

1578. The Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions.
1584. A Handefull of Pleasant Delites.
1592. Breton's Bower of Delites.
1593. The Phœnix Nest.
1597. The Arbor of Amorous Devises.
1599. The Passionate Pilgrim.
1600. England's Helicon.
1602. A Poetical Rhapsody.

one of the earliest English satires (see Arber's Reprint), and Sackville, who is numbered among the Elizabethan singers, all belonged to the merry company. From the moment of the publication of *Tottel's Miscellany* the school had control of English poetry. At least ten collections of poetry modeled on Tottel's were published during the reign of Elizabeth, some of them going through many editions. *Tottel's Miscellany* was published eight times before 1587, and the *Paradyse of Daynty Devises* went through nine editions between 1576 and 1606.

The influence of these early lyrists in schooling England for the new era cannot be estimated. "They gave," says Collins, "the death-blow to that rudeness, that grotesqueness, that prolixity, that diffuseness, that pedantry, which had deformed with fatal persistency the poetry of mediævalism, and while they purified our language from the Gallicisms of Chaucer and his followers, they fixed the permanent standard of our versification." Much that they wrote is rude and unfinished. It is not easy to read long in their "sugared sonnets." One has to drive himself to the task, but their work is immeasurably superior to that of their immediate predecessors. And all at once as we read on we find ourselves in the glorious era of Elizabeth. "It is," says Washburn, "as if like the first voyagers over the Atlantic, after picking up in the waste a bough or two laden with spring blossoms and hearing the voice of a stray land bird, we had suddenly come on the vision of a fresh continent."

TABLE VII.—AGE OF THE RENAISSANCE, 1485–1557

English Literature.	English History.	Foreign.
I. Prose.	The Tudor Era.	1474–1533. Ariosto. Rise of Romantic Epic.
1. Sir Thomas More, 1485–1535.	1485–1509. Henry VII.	1475–1564. Michel Angelo.
Utopia, 1516; translation, 1551.	1497. Cornish Rebellion.	1477–1576. Titian.
Richard III., 1557.	1499. Colet and Erasmus at Oxford.	1478–1511. Giorgione.
2. Roger Ascham, 1515–1586.	1505. Colet Dean of St. Paul's.	1483–1520. Raphael.
Toxophilus, 1544.	1509–1547. Henry VIII.	1490–1547. Vittoria Colonna. Rise of Lyric Poetry.
The Scholemaster, 1570.	1513. Battle of Spiers and of Flodden.	1492. Columbus.
3. William Tyndale, 1484–1536.	1513. Wolsey becomes Prime Minister.	1497. Cabot discovers North America.
Translation of New Testament, 1525.	1521. Quarrel of Luther with Henry VIII.	1498. Da Gama rounds Africa.
The Practice of Prelates, 1531.	1526. Henry resolves on divorce.	1498. Savonarola burned.
4. Hugh Latimer, 1491–1555.	1529. Fall of Wolsey.	1500. The theory of Copernicus.
The Ploughers, 1549.	1531. King acknowledged as supreme head of the Church.	1506. First stone of St. Peter's.
Seven Sermons, 1549.	1535. Execution of More.	1516. Erasmus' Greek Testament.
II. Poetry.	1539. Suppression of greater Abbeys.	1517. Luther's XCV. Theses.
1. Sir Thomas Wyatt, 1503–1542.	1547. Execution of Surrey.	1520. Cortez conquers Mexico.
Songs and Sonnets.	1547–1553. Edward VI.	1523. Luther's New Testament.
2. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, 1517–1547.	1547. Battle of Pinkie Cleugh.	1524. Birth of Ronsard.
Translation of the *Æneid*, Books II. and IV.	1548. Book of Common Prayer.	1547. Cervantes born.
Songs and Sonnets.	1553–1558. Mary.	1549. Tasso born.
3. Other Courtly Makers:	1554. Mary marries Philip of Spain.	1553. Death of Rabelais.
George Gascoigne, 1525–1577.	1555. Persecution of Protestants begins.	
Thomas Sackville, 1536–1608.	1556. Burning of Cranmer.	
Nicholas Grimald, 1519–1562.	1558. Loss of Calais.	
	1558–1603. Elizabeth.	

CHAPTER XV

THE EVOLUTION OF THE DRAMA

Authorities. The most serviceable and accessible authorities for the general student are **Manly,** *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama;* **Pollard,** *English Miracle Plays;* **Symonds,** *Shakespeare's Predecessors,* and **Morley,** *English Writers.* One who wishes to pursue the subject further can consult **Ward,** *History of English Dramatic Literature;* **Fleay,** *Chronicle History of the London Stage*, and *Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama;* **Ulrici,** *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art*, and **Collier**, *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, all scholarly and exhaustive works. For a complete bibliography, see **Stoddard,** *References for Students of Miracle Plays and Mysteries*, University of California, Bulletin No. 8, and *A Brief Bibliography of the English Drama before Elizabeth*, University of Chicago Publications.

The history of the English drama is a story of "backsliding." The Miracle play had sprung from the most sacred rites of the Church; its earliest mission had been to instruct, to inspire, to make holy. It had wandered at length from its early surroundings even into the streets, and little by little its earnestness, its piety and holiness, had faded into mere morality. The clergy forsook it; it passed into the fellowship of laymen and of laborers. Gradually it became more and more worldly; it threw off the last vestige of its religious life, until the simple artisans turned away and left it the companion of wild roisterers and professional mountebanks, whose only

object was to amuse, to fill with forgetfulness an idle hour. And this might have been the end had not the new learning rescued it and turned it into wider channels.

1. The Moralities. It is impossible to fix a date even approximating the time when the Miracle play began to shade into the Morality; when abstractions, mere personifications of good and evil qualities, began to displace the old Bible characters. *The Castle of Perseverence*, the earliest Morality play that has come down to us, belongs to the reign of Henry VI.; but it is certain that Moralities were acted much earlier. The change was a gradual one. The Miracle play, as Ulrici declares, was epic in its character.

The action is still a purely external occurrence, the reasons and motives of which lie beyond the stage, nay, generally beyond this earthly life; no action is derived from the life and character of the dramatic personages, of results from previous conditions and relations; every character appears unexpectedly and unprepared, like an accidental occurrence in nature; every action appears but as the special incident of the plan designed by God in Bible history, and consequently, as in the *epos*, depends more or less upon the invisible threads with which the Divine Power directs the lives of mortals; in short, the action takes place more *for* men than *through* men. The latter are merely tools in the hand of God, or the vessels which have to receive the Divine will, and to carry out the Divine act; the whole story passes by them, like a mere occurrence, their personal participation consists only in the feeling, sympathy, and receptive activity of their minds; the individuality, the freedom of the will, the character of the persons represented, do not come the least into the play.—*Shakespeare's Dramatic Art.*

It was impossible for the drama to remain long on this level and retain its hold on the people. From the very first secular elements began to steal in. Noah's wife with her gossiping circle, and the shepherds of the Nativity, who are but rude English peasants, were a wide

departure from the biblical and spiritual world. It was this human addition alone that kept the Miracle plays alive after their first spiritual glow had passed. The element was constantly increased. Pharaoh and Pilate became in time mere ranting clowns; Herod was permitted even to leave the stage and rage in the street, and the actor who could "out-Herod Herod," in Shakespeare's phrase, pleased best the common people. To reconcile this secular element with the traditional religious basis of the plays, allegory was gradually introduced, and at length the Morality play pure and simple was evolved. Its creation marks an epoch in the history of the drama. "It is the transition of the drama from heaven to earth, from the next world of the religious conception to the present one of the moral action, from the ideal to the real."

As a whole, the Moralities are dry indeed. Few readers have the will power to force themselves far into the dusty mass. The plays have almost no literary merit, but they are full of possibilities for action. The action is everything; without it the play is a lifeless heap. In each there is a clown, who is some element of perverseness,—Vice, Sin, Fraud, Iniquity,—and his fun consists almost wholly in blows, quarrelings, and impish tricks. At every opportunity he belabors the devil, who roars lustily and at length carries him off on his back to the flames.

In the Moralities we pass the border-line between known and unknown authorship. The early drama was anonymous; the Miracle plays seem to have sprung up as spontaneously as *Beowulf;* we can only guess at their origin; a few of the later Moralities however are by known

writers. One of the earliest figures on this vague frontier is the poet Skelton, who is known to have produced four Morality plays, one of which, *Magnificence*, has survived. Its plot illustrates fully the methods employed by this whole class of plays. Magnificence, the title character, while in perplexity, takes as counsellors a motley crowd of seeming friends: Fancy, Counterfeit-countenance, Cloaked-collusion, Crafty-conveyance, and others, and following their advice is brought to ruin. "He comes under the blows of Adversity," says Pollard, "is visited by Poverty, Despair, and Mischief. Only the entrance of Good Hope saves him from suicide, but by the aid of Redress, Sad Circumspection, and Perseverance he is eventually restored to his high estate." Even from this bare description it can easily be gathered how much of the interest depended on the players, upon their costumes and behavior.

From a literary standpoint, the best of the Moralities are doubtless *Everyman*, probably written late in the fifteenth century, and *Hyke Scorner*, which stands on the border-line between the Morality and the Interlude.

REQUIRED READING. Description of the manner of acting *The Castle of Perseverence*, Pollard, p. 197; and Pollard's selection from *Everyman*. Consult *Hamlet*, III., ii., and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, I., ii., and V., i.

2. *Heywood's Interludes.* The Morality play allowed far more freedom to the dramatist than did the Miracle. It dealt with a broader range of subjects; it could draw its characters from the lives of saints and the legendary history of the Church, as well as from the whole field of abstract human qualities, and it offered far wider opportunities for action and for rough humor; but it was still

greatly restricted. The religious element was still its basis, and its characters were of necessity wooden and lifeless. They lacked flesh and blood; an abstract quality personified can never be galvanized into life. The abundance of action in the Moralities, the buffoonery and horse-play, had kept them alive; they had pleased the people precisely as the Punch-and-Judy shows please children to-day; but without an added element they never could have made an advance. The drama, says Miss Bates, had "dribbled into miserable hybrids neither secular nor sacred." But at length a saving element began to appear; actual men and women, familiar village types, began to take places among the puppets. *Hyke Scorner*, the last of the Moralities, brings before us a delightful study from real life. He is a creature of the borderland bearing the name of an abstract human attribute and yet characterized until we recognize the type.

Suddenly at this point there appeared a writer "bold enough," in the words of Ward, "to throw overboard altogether the traditionary machinery and the personified abstractions of allegory and elevate to the first place the personal types which had been gradually introduced." With Heywood the English drama lost the last traces of its religious origin: it was no longer to be a medium of instruction; its sole function was to amuse.

In creating the Interlude Heywood was only obeying the voice of the times. The reign of Henry VIII. was an era of untold love of ostentation and amusement. A gay whirl of pleasure was in constant demand. Every court occasion, every move of the sovereign or his circle, must be accompanied with appropriate pageants and plays, the more gay and boisterous the better. To meet

the extravagant demands of the times a class of professional actors had sprung up. Not only the King but also many of the nobles kept bands of players continually in their employ. There was an unusual demand for plays, and vast numbers were created, many of them extemporaneous productions which perished with the occasion. All through the Tudor century, that most intense and active era in English history, plays and pageants were made and acted in unheard-of profusion. It was John Heywood, a musician and actor in the court of Henry VIII. who, more than any one else, directed the current into its new channel. He realized that the demand was for short secular pieces,—little farces that went with vigor and snap and were soon over; and his *The Pardoner and the Friar*, *The Four P's*, and other pieces mark another era in English dramatic history.

The Four P's may be taken as a type of the Interlude. The plot is simple indeed. Four familiar characters, a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potycary, and a Pedler, engage in a lying contest, and the prize is won by the Palmer, who declares that

> In all places where I haue ben
> Of all the women that I haue sene,
> I neuer sawe or knewe, in my consyens,
> Any one woman out of paciens.

The humor of the piece consists almost wholly in the droll raillery of the actors at each other's professions, in coarse jokes and allusions, in puns, and animated disputes. There is such a redundancy of wit that it becomes wearisome and even nauseating. In Heywood's *Play between John the Husband and Tyb the Wife* we are shown the

woes of a henpecked husband, which culminate in a hard beating for the poor victim.

REQUIRED READING. Heywood, *The Pardoner and the Friar* in Pollard, *English Miracle Plays.*

3. The Classic Comedy. It is at this point that the line of the new learning crosses the path of the drama. The Interludes had been without a trace of foreign influence; they had grown spontaneously and naturally from the native religious drama; but in 1536, or later, while Heywood was still writing, Nicholas Udall, a scholar of note, head master of Eton, and afterwards head master of Westminster School, turned his attention to dramatic work, and, like a true son of the Renaissance, modeled his play after classic patterns. The writers most prized by the new learning seem to have been Plautus, Terence, and Seneca. Erasmus and others of his school knew their Terence by heart. It is not strange that Udall, attempting an English drama, should turn to these Latin masters, that he should declare in his prologue that Plautus and Terence " among the learned at this day bear the bell." His *Ralph Roister Doister* is but a careful imitation of the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus. Heywood had depended on dialogue, on incessant rapier flashes of wit; he had drawn his characters from actual life, but he had not attempted the development of character by dialogue and action. The plays of Plautus had aimed to reproduce their age by means of comic characterization; they had made studies from real life, and they had depended not alone upon dialogue and brilliancy of wit but upon action and contrasts of character. Udall held to the best points of both the Latin and the English drama, and the result was an epoch-making work,—*Ralph Roister Doister*,

the first English comedy. It is not in itself a great play; it is full of Latin echoes; its principal characters are copied faithfully from Plautus; its methods are borrowed either from the Latin master or from Heywood,—but nevertheless it marks a new tendency. In it we find blended for the first time naturalness, individuality of characterization, sprightliness of dialogue, brilliancy of wit, and freedom of action. It is also significant that it is divided into five acts, each subdivided into scenes.

Udall's work was followed before 1562 by another notable comedy, *Gammer Gurtons Nedle*, by an anonymous writer, perhaps John Still, Bishop of Bath and Wells. At first sight it seems like a step backward, for, compared with *Ralph Roister Doister*, the play is rude and unclassic, the plot is exceedingly slender, and the humor and the language are coarse and popular. A careful reading of the comedy, however, quickly corrects such an estimate. The play is unquestionably the most promising dramatic work that had been produced in England up to that time. It was but a step from *Gammer Gurton* to the *Comedy of Errors* and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, for its characters are living people, and they act and speak and think just as might be expected of characters in their walk of life and under the same conditions. The play manifestly tried to follow classic rules, but notwithstanding this its spirit is almost wholly English. It takes us into the coarse, brutal world of the English peasantry. We can imagine as we read it where the early audiences would burst into boisterous merriment. Such people are insensible to the more delicate forms of wit and humor: nothing will make them laugh but coarse horse-play, vulgar jokes, and hard blows. When Dr. Rat appears with

his broken head, all burst into a roar which increases the more he complains, and the climax of mirth comes when the two good wives of the play, after exhausting their copious vocabularies, fall upon each other, tooth and nail. It is no imaginary picture; it is the real England that we are looking at, and these are types of the great majority of its people. These rude creatures in scanty leather clothing, with their narrow little world, with their ignorance, their nearness to the soil, are as truly Englishmen as the perfumed gallants of the great Henry's court. How full of coarse life they are! With what broad strokes are Hodge, and Tyb, and Dame Chat, and Dr. Rat made real to us! It is as if we were actually visiting a rural hamlet. We feel acquainted even with Gyb, the cat, jumping into "the milk-pan over head and ears"; crouching in the fireplace until Hodge blows upon her eyes, thinking them coals; and gasping with a bone in her throat until all believe that she has swallowed the needle. There is a touch of nature in the work, an unconscious portrayal of character, a study of life at first hand, that promised glorious things. It is a document in the nation's history; it gives us more of the actual Tudor England than the whole school of the Courtly Makers with their elaborate library of miscellanies. England was moving with huge strides toward its greatest creative epoch.

REQUIRED READING. Drinking song in Act. II. of *Gammer Gurton*, "Back and syde go bare," and Act III., iv.; Manly, *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama*, Vol. ii.

4. The Classic Tragedy. (See Cunliffe, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy.*) Only one more step

was necessary to prepare the English drama for the great masters who were so soon to mold it into its final form. Up to this point there had been no attempt at artistic development; there had been no appreciation of "dramatic form." Even in the early comedies, which had been produced confessedly under the influence of Plautus and Terence, "the action," in the words of Ulrici, "is still devoid of anything like an organic center; it consists merely of a series of comic scenes, which turn upon the unraveling of a simple and in itself an unimportant plot." This sense of artistic form is first found in the tragedies which sprang up shortly after the appearance of the early comedy. During the middle of the century the later Latin writers, especially Seneca, became exceedingly popular with English scholars. In the decade following the year 1559 no less than five English authors busied themselves with translations from Seneca, and in 1581 a complete edition of his works was issued. It was but natural that in such an active era there should spring up an English drama modeled upon Seneca and his school.

To naturalize in England the classic tragedy, however, was by no means an easy task. The comedy had proved easily adaptable; it had found in the early English plays many elements which it could appropriate. The Interludes of Heywood had paved the way for the entrance of real comedy, but tragedy, especially after the model of Seneca, was an exotic form. It was highly artificial; it required but little action; it depended upon sonorous lines,—upon ringing forensic dialogue; it held rigidly to the unities of time, place, and action; and, permeated with the Greek artistic sense, it kept in the background

all realistic details of suffering or death. The new school turned away completely from the rude native drama: they would throw it away utterly and substitute the purely classic type. Roger Ascham in *The Scholemaster* lamented that not one of the English plays "is able to abyde the trew touch of Aristotle's preceptes and Euripides' examples," and even Sidney, at the very dawn of the new era, complained bitterly of the wholesale violations of the classic requirements.

The earliest of these tragedies, *Gorboduc* or *Ferrex and Porrex*, the joint work of Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, was first acted in 1562. It is a significant production, for, though it falls far short of the Senecan models, and though it is dreary and monotonous, a mere running series, to use Sidney's description, "of stately speeches and well sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style," each announcing deaths and murders by the wholesale, "its theme is serious and of tragic significance; the treatment is dignified, and, from the special point of view, adequate." The play is also significant since it used for the first time blank verse for dramatic purposes, and since it drew its plot from the national history. Following its lead there came a long series of tragedies whose subjects came more and more from the national chronicles: *Tancred and Gismunda*, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, *The Troublesome Raign of King John*, and numerous others. Compared with the later drama they are still rude and inartistic: their tragedy consists merely of recitals of slaughter; their art lies wholly in their careful imitation of classic models; they possess no trace of the spontaneousness and naturalness of the early comedies,—and yet despite all this their

advent was a long step in the direction of the regular drama.

It must not be gathered that the English drama was a perfect evolution, that with each advance the old type disappeared and the new took its place. As a matter of fact, the Miracle plays persisted until well into the century; the Chester Cycle was still acted in 1577; and as late as 1601, while Shakespeare and his group were in the full tide of production, Queen Elizabeth took pleasure in witnessing a Morality play of the most primitive type. It has been our purpose to note only the tendency of the drama, and to show that despite the seeming confusion, despite the persistence of early types, it was steadily moving forward toward more perfect form and methods. Notwithstanding the fact that in 1579, the year that we have taken as the close of our period, all varieties of dramatic work were simultaneously before the people; notwithstanding that the field seemed to be a chaos and that no one type of dramatic art had reached perfection or had in any way shown itself strong enough to lead the others, it must nevertheless be remembered that all of the elements which finally produced the Elizabethan drama had been evolved, and that it needed but the hand of a master to mold them into their ultimate form and to breathe into them the breath of life.

TABLE VIII.—THE EVOLUTION OF THE DRAMA

	CHARACTERISTICS.	CHARACTERS.	AUTHORS.	THE LEADING PLAYS.
I. MIRACLES OR MYSTERIES.	*Religious.* The epic element predominant.	Scriptural figures.	Impersonal, like the primal poetry.	*The Chester Cycle*, 1268–1577. *The Coventry Cycle.* *The York Cycle.*
II. MORALITIES.	*Moral.* Didactic; allegory predominant.	Abstractions; personified human qualities.	Border-line. A few signed pieces, like Skelton's.	*The Castle of Perseverence.* *Magnificence.* *Everyman.* *Hyke Scorner.*
III. INTERLUDES.	*Secular.* Short, extravagant, loaded with wit. More largely human..	Familiar types; rudely characterized.	Heywood and other professional entertainers.	*The Pardoner and the Friar*, 1532. *Husband and Wife*, 1532. *The Four P's*, 1540.
THE NEW LEARNING SUDDENLY CHANGES THE NATURE OF THE DRAMA.				
IV. EARLY COMEDY.	Comic characterization predominant.	Studies from nature.	Admirers of Plautus: Udall, Still, etc.	*Ralph Roister Doister*, c. 1536. *Gammer Gurtons Nedle*, c. 1575.
V. EARLY TRAGEDY.	Dramatic form predominant.	Historic personages.	Admirers of Seneca: Norton, Sackville, etc.	*Gorboduc* or *Ferrex and Porrex*, c. 1562. *Tancred and Gismunda*, 1568. *The Misfortunes of Arthur.*
VI. THE REGULAR DRAMA.	Perfect lifelikeness; submissive only to the demands of actual life.	Studies from nature, history, and romance.	Shakespeare and his school.	The plays of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER XVI

THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

1579–1649

FROM SPENSER'S "SHEPHEARDES CALENDER" TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Authorities. **Froude,** *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth,* is the supreme authority; the best short history is **Creighton,** *Age of Elizabeth.* **Bright,** *History of England,* Vol. ii.; **Creighton,** *The Tudors and the Reformation;* **Macaulay,** *Essay on Lord Burleigh,* and **Corbett,** *Drake and the Tudor Navy,* may be consulted with profit. **Lingard,** *History of England,* tells the story from the Catholic point of view. To gain a vivid conception of the era one should also consult **Harrison,** *Elizabethan England* (Camelot Series); **Thornbury,** *Shakespeare's England;* **Goadby,** *Shakespeare's England;* **Drake,** *Shakespeare and his Times,* and **Warner,** *The People for whom Shakespeare Wrote.* For literary conditions, see **Hazlitt,** *Elizabethan Literature;* **Whipple,** *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth;* **Saintsbury,** *Elizabethan Literature;* **Crofts,** *English Literature,* 1509–1625, and **Hannay,** *The Later Renaissance.*

The great intellectual awakening of the fifteenth century commonly known as the Renaissance produced more immediate effects upon the Latin nations of Europe than upon the Teutonic. Under its influence, Italy, France, and Spain burst all in a moment into a new intellectual life, but the northern nations, especially England, developed more slowly. We have already noted how

the new learning, the earliest English phase of the Renaissance, had drifted into religious and social channels. Instead of becoming at once, as in Italy and France, a constructive power impelling the nation toward artistic creation, it took from the very first a destructive form, and it directed its first energies against the corruptions and excesses of the national Church. It insisted upon mild measures; it would purge away evils, religious and social, by a gradual evolution through education and enlightenment. But the impetuous and self-seeking spirit of Henry VIII. precipitated the work of reform, and the Protestantism of Luther, which entered England at this critical moment, threw everything into confusion. An era of storm and change followed. Four times within a single generation was the national religion changed, and each change was accompanied by a veritable "reign of terror." In the words of Macaulay, "Edward persecuted Catholics. Mary persecuted Protestants. Elizabeth persecuted Catholics again. The father of those three sovereigns had enjoyed the pleasure of persecuting both sects at once." Until well into the reign of Elizabeth England was a seething cauldron, and the very thought of literary art well-nigh died out of English hearts.

Machiavelli, 1469–1527.
Ariosto, 1474–1533.
Michel Angelo, 1475–1564.
Vittoria Colonna, 1490–1547.
Rabelais, 1495–1553.
Marot, 1497–1544.
Ronsard, 1524–1585.
Montaigne, 1533–1592.
Boscan, 1493–1550.
Garcilaso, 1503–1536.
Cervantes, 1547–1616.
Lope de Vega, 1562–1635.

The Era of Reconstruction. The first twenty years of Elizabeth were as barren of original literary products as was any other equal period since the days of Edward III. Almost nothing save translations from the Latin came from the English presses. The accession of Elizabeth

was a time of doubt and fear; it was the most critical period in English history. The island had been swept by a tidal wave; nothing seemed fixed and permanent.

For fifty years [says R. W. Church] the English people had had before its eyes the great vicissitudes which make tragedy. They had seen the most unforeseen and most unexpected revolutions in what had for ages been held certain and immovable; the overthrow of the strongest institutions, and the most venerable authorities; the violent shifting of feelings from faith to passionate rejection, from reverence to scorn and a hate which could not be satisfied. They had seen the strangest turns of fortune, the most wonderful elevations to power, the most terrible visitations of disgrace. They had seen the mightiest ruined, the brightest and most admired brought down to shame and death, men struck down with all the forms of law, whom the age honored as its noblest ornaments. . . . Such a time of surprise—of hope and anxiety, of horror and anguish to-day, of relief and exultation to-morrow—had hardly been in England as the first half of the sixteenth century. All that could stir men's souls, all that could inflame their hearts, or that could wring them, had happened.

The future looked black and threatening. Elizabeth was regarded with fear and distrust. Her speedy marriage was thought to be inevitable, and the destinies of England were in the hands of her husband, whoever he might be. The reign of Mary had thrown the shadow of an inevitable conflict over the island; before England could again be free she must defeat Spain, the wealthiest and most powerful nation of Europe. As the husband of Mary, Philip had claimed England as a part of his own vast empire, and he had consented to the accession of Elizabeth under the firm belief that she would continue the Catholic faith and would at once consent to unite with him in marriage. The Inquisition was to be extended to England, and the future of the island was to be merged into that of the great empire of the South. Such was the state of affairs in 1558. No wonder that

the nation was restless and fearful; no wonder that it took more than twenty years of her reign to restore confidence in English hearts.

We need not follow the windings of Elizabeth's career. No monarch was ever beset with more perplexities—religious, political, and personal. During the first half of her reign the religious quarrel was active and dangerous, but at last, under her peculiar policy, Protestantism became firmly established. During nearly thirty years Mary Queen of Scots, who had been named as her successor and who was to reëstablish the Catholic Church, was a constant danger; whatever the Queen might do with her was open to fierce criticism. Her policy on the whole, was one of toleration. The scaffold on Tower Hill went to decay; in fourteen years not a single noble went to execution. She made every effort to keep the nation from war, and every interval of peace she used in adding to the national resources and strengthening the country for possible emergencies. Her strong point was diplomacy. So skilfully did she play her antagonists against each other,—promising marriage first to this one, then to that, seizing each point of vantage and using every possible means of retreat, and deceiving in a thousand wily ways, and again and again, the most subtle diplomats of Europe,—that she succeeded in putting off for thirty years the inevitable conflict with Spain, and when at last it came she was more than ready.

1533. Birth of Elizabeth.
1558. Her Coronation.
1560. Scotland and Ireland Added to the Crown.
1566. Birth of James.
1570. Elizabeth Excommunicated.
1572. St. Bartholomew.
1576. Blackfriars Theatre.
1580. The Jesuit Invasion.
1587. Shakespeare in London.
1587. Mary Beheaded.
1588. The Spanish Armada.
1598. The Irish Rebellion.
1603. Death of Elizabeth.

It took a quarter of a century of such statesmanship to reassure England and to bring back confidence and "national consciousness." They came all at once. When the great Armada, loaded with the soldiery that for years had been spreading terror over the Low Countries of Europe, and filled with shackles and instruments of torture for the establishment of an English Inquisition, had at length, by sheer English pluck and skill, been sent flying up the Channel, there arose from the whole nation a mighty shout of patriotic pride and exultation, and with that shout was born the England of to-day.

The Sea-Kings. It was almost literally a new England that swelled this burst of patriotism. While the Queen had been struggling with her problems, while she had been coquetting with kings and ambassadors, and had been postponing with all her wily arts the inevitable struggle with Spain, a new spirit and a new nation had grown up around her. The new world beyond the Atlantic had influenced mightily the imagination of the age. The ships of Pizarro and Cortez with their loads of gold and gems had filled all Europe with feverish unrest. After these realities nothing seemed impossible. The sixteenth century witnessed a mad scramble for the wealth of the new lands, and England joined early in the struggle. The old Viking spirit awoke in English hearts; it was the era of the sea-kings: Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher, Gilbert, Cavendish. They plunged into every sea; they searched the Arctic ice for the Northwest Passage; they descended like sea-wolves upon the

1563. Hawkins Opens the Slave-Trade.
1572. Drake Harries the Spanish Main.
1576–1578. Frobisher's Three Voyages.
1577–1580. Drake Rounds the Globe.
1583. Gilbert's Colony in Newfoundland.
1584–1587. Raleigh's Attempts to Settle Virginia.
1585–1587. Davis seeks Northwest Passage.

1585-1588. Drake Harries the Spaniards.
1586-1588. Cavendish Scours the Pacific.
1588. The Spanish Armada.

rich booty of the Spanish Main; they burst into the unknown Pacific and solved its secret; they rounded Scandinavia and opened new routes to Russia and the far East. Their exploits read like the deeds of a mythic age. It was another epic era, with men of true epic mold. When we read of the mad exploits of Drake, his dash into the very jaws of the Spanish ports, his destruction of the ships that were building for the great Armada, and his capture of the rich East Indiaman in the very harbor of Cadiz; or the last fight of the *Revenge* under Sir Richard Grenville,—his ship becalmed and surrounded by fifteen Spanish men-of-war, fighting hand to hand like wolves for fifteen hours, until only twenty of his one hundred and fifty men remained alive; or the last words of Gilbert sinking in his foundered vessel, "We are as near to heaven by sea as by land,"—when we read of such deeds by scores and hundreds we no longer wonder at the great strides that England all at once made in her national life—for what nation could be small while witnessing the deeds of such men; we no longer wonder at the sudden burst of Elizabethan literature; men had only to write as they lived to make works which would be immortal.

Social Conditions. One of the first results of this new age of the Vikings was a mighty increase in English commerce. Along the whole seaboard little towns began to awake and to spring into activity and prominence. The new slave-trade, the rich products of the Indies, East and West, the spoils of the world that now began to pour into the home island, increased enormously the national wealth. The whole system of society was changed.

The ancient nobility had well-nigh disappeared and their places had been taken by a new aristocracy elevated from the middle class and endowed from the broken monasteries. But a new and powerful element was appearing. The wealth of the great commercial movement was pouring into the laps of the middle-class merchants, and they soon became a dominating power. It was no longer birth, but wealth, which made the gentleman. The lines of caste were breaking down; every man, no matter what his origin, had a chance to rise.

Below the middle class were the small landholders,—the yeomen and cottagers, the sturdy old native stock, then as always the muscle and vigor of the nation. We shall see them more and more, crowding the theatre pits, manning the ships of Frobisher and Drake, swelling the armies of Elizabeth and Cromwell. It was a people teeming with vitality, eager for activity, intensely religious even to superstition. They were prodigal of life; they went to death cheerfully; they delighted like their Teutonic ancestry in hard blows, in danger and battle, in reckless adventure. They were brutal in their amusements: bear and bull baiting became almost the national pastime.

It was an era of rapid change in manners and customs. The nobles were moving out of the dismal, windowless castles into bright and comfortable homes; armor with all its accompaniments was rapidly disappearing; a thousand household comforts, undreamed of in the earlier days, were to be found even in the homes of the poor. The vast increase of wealth soon led to untold extravagance. Never before had there been such magnificence of apparel.

There was [says Warner] no limit to the caprice and extravagance. Hose and breeches of silk, velvet, or other rich stuff, and fringed garters wrought of gold or silver, worth five pounds apiece, are some of the items noted. Burton says, "'Tis ordinary for a gallant to put a thousand oaks and an hundred oxen into a suit of apparel, to wear a whole manor on his back." Even serving-men and tailors wore jewels in their shoes. We should note also the magnificence in the furnishing of houses, the arras, tapestries, cloth of gold and silver, silk hangings of many colors, the splendid plate on the tables and sideboards. Even in the houses of the middle classes the furniture was rich and comfortable, and there was an air of amenity in the chambers and parlors strewn with sweet herbs and daily decked with pretty nosegays and fragrant flowers.—*The People for whom Shakespeare Wrote.*

Life was gay and joyous; everywhere there was an atmosphere of boundless hope, of infinite possibility.

Queen Elizabeth. The center of all this activity and life was the Queen. "It may be very well asserted," writes Jusserand, "that whatever the branch of art or literature you wish to understand you must first study Elizabeth." Rogers' engraving of the Queen arrayed in all her magnificence almost surpasses belief. "Around her was a perpetual field of cloth of gold, and the nobles sold their lands in order to appear at court sufficiently embroidered." Her royal progresses were miracles of splendor. Even the pen of Scott was not equal to the description of her visit to Kenilworth Castle. To the very last her love of finery and gems was a ruling passion. After her death there were found in her wardrobe no less than three thousand rich dresses.

After the Armada year the Queen was the national idol, the embodiment of the national patriotism. A new chivalry flowered about her. Sidney and Raleigh are the best types of that gallant and noble group of young men that stood ready to do her will, and their spirit permeated

the whole nation. Again and again in the Elizabethan writers, notably in Shakespeare, do we catch the thrill of devotion to Queen and to fatherland that was stirring in every breast.

> This England never did, nor never shall
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror. . . .
> Come the three corners of the world in arms
> And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
> If England to herself do rest but true,

cries Philip in *King John*, and he, with John of Gaunt in *Richard II.*, who called England

> This other Eden, demi paradise. . . .
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,

and with Bolingbroke, who declared that

> Where'er I wander boast of this I can,
> Though banished, yet a true-born Englishman,

was but voicing the thought of every English heart.

Such was the England of Elizabeth. It was like a youth teeming with life and the sense of power, just freed from early restraints, running to excesses, full of romance and dreams. The nation had nothing to hamper it; it had fought its way into a leading place among the powers of the world; it was free, and it had all the resources for perfect independence. The language was at last ready,—a wonderful instrument, fit for the hands of the masters. The new poets and scholars were without models to restrain them. The way was clear for creation, and there was every incentive.

Literary Conditions. The year 1579, twenty-one years

after the accession of Elizabeth, since it witnessed the publication of Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, the first work since Chaucer showing real poetic inspiration, and Lily's *Euphues*, "the first book of Elizabeth's reign which attained to really commanding notoriety," may be taken as the opening date of the great creative period generally known as the Elizabethan era. But the twenty-one years, though barren of actual literary production, are full of wonderful literary interest. The great writers who were to be the chief glory of her reign were most of them unborn when the Queen took the throne. "The immortals never appear alone," says Schiller: within the short space of twelve years there was born in England the most marvelous group of literary masters since the days of Greece. It was the early springtime of a great era. On every side there were bursting and springing the germs that so long had waited for mild and peaceful skies. The spirit of the Italian Renaissance so long repressed at last was free. The fearful pressure that had been on English hearts was lifting; men could dream of toleration and freedom. The new learning had educated England. With a sovereign who could read Greek and write Latin verse, ignorance was no longer fashionable. The grammar schools were giving new life to the middle classes; more persons could read in England than at any previous time in her history, and this fact created a wide demand for reading matter. An era of translation followed. Ascham, who wrote his *Scholemaster* between 1563 and 1568, declared that "bookes, of late translated

1552. Spenser and Raleigh.
1553. Hooker and Lily.
1554. Sidney.
1558. Lodge, Nash, Peele.
1559. Chapman.
1560. Greene.
1561. Bacon.
1562. Daniel.
1563. Drayton.
1564. Marlowe and Shakespeare.

out of Italian into English, [were] sold in every shop in London," and he further added that "there be moe of these vngratious bookes set out in Printe within these few monethes, than have bene sene in England many score yeares before." In the twenty-five years following Surrey's translation of the *Æneid* there appeared no less than twenty-five important translations from the Latin and the Italian, more than half of them being from Seneca, Ovid, and Virgil. Nearly all of the great creators—Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare—began with translations or imitations of classic writers.

Thus after more than a century the Renaissance entered England. The same enthusiasm for the ancient masters, the same eager spirit of creation, the same sensuous delight in beauty and in art, the same spontaneous outpourings of genius that had marked the Italian Renaissance, now marked the English. The literary product, like that of Italy, was dominated by the Greek spirit, and yet it was spontaneous and original. The era ended with the Commonwealth, when a new order gained the ascendency in England. For a period, the Hebraic spirit was in control; the Bible was the central fact in English religion, politics, and literature.

The Elizabethan literature was the literature of a city; during the whole of the era London, so far as literature was concerned, was England. Outside its limits the island was still in the barren era that had followed Chaucer. In addition to this, the literature of London was for the rich and the elegant. Spenser then, as now, appealed to a small and select audience; Lily wrote confessedly only for fashionable ladies, and even the dramatists, though the poorer classes crowded the theatre

pits, wrote first of all for the rich and the noble. A realization of these facts will add much to an understanding of the Elizabethan writers.

SUGGESTED READING. Scott, *Kenilworth*, *The Monastery*, and *The Abbot*; Kingsley, *Westward Ho!*; Macaulay's poem, *The Armada*; Miss Yonge, *Unknown to History*; Wordsworth, *White Doe of Rylstone*; Tennyson, *Queen Mary*; Swinburne, *Mary Stuart*.

CHAPTER XVII

SIDNEY AND SPENSER

Authorities. The best materials for a study of the period between Wyatt and Spenser are Arber's editions of **Googe,** *Eglogues, Epitaphs, and Sonnets* (1563); **Gascoigne,** *The Steel Glass* (1576); **Gosson,** *School of Abuse* (1579); **Sidney,** *Defense of Poesy* (1580), and **Robinson,** *Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1584). **Minto,** *English Poets,* Ch. iii.; **Sackville-West,** *The Works of Thomas Sackville,* and **Schelling,** *Life and Writings of George Gascoigne,* should also be consulted.

The years between the publication of *Tottel's Miscellany* and *The Shepheardes Calender* stand in the history of English poetry as the era of the Courtly Makers. After the success of Wyatt and Surrey it became highly fashionable for the gay group about the king to breathe its amorous woes in verse modeled after Italian lyrists. A few there were like Gascoigne, the author of *The Steel Glass,* and Sackville, whose contributions to the *Mirror for Magistrates* show a surprising strength, that were true poets, but the age as a whole deserved the taunt of Sidney. Poetry, he declared, "is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children," and in summing up the achievements of the English Muse he found at the very middle of Elizabeth's reign that there had been but four poets whose works deserved mention. He says:

Chaucer, undoubtedly, did excellently in his Troilus and Cressida; of whom, truly, I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumblingly after him. Yet had he great wants, fit to be forgiven in so reverend

antiquity. I account the Mirror of Magistrates meetly furnished of beautiful parts; and in the Earl of Surrey's lyrics many things tasting of a noble birth, and worthy of a noble mind. The Shepherd's Calendar hath much poetry in his eclogues, indeed worthy the reading, if I be not deceived. . . . Besides these, I do not remember to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed, that have poetical sinews in them.

Sidney modestly forgets his own poetic achievements, but no other critic can omit them. He occupies a unique place in English poetry: half-way between the old and the new, the last of the Courtly Makers, the first of the Elizabethan creators, he stands a transition figure at the portal of the new era. As the president of the Areopagus he was leader of the group that would bind English poetry with the classic prosody; yet his sonnet sequence, written after the new methods, became the chief inspiration of the school that opposed the old measures. Though destined to become the typical figure of the Elizabethan era, he maintained at its very dawn that the English drama should adhere to the unities of Aristotle and avoid mixing comedy and tragedy,—advice which if followed would have made Shakespeare and his school impossible,—and he died knowing nothing of Shakespeare, and Bacon, and Jonson, nothing of the Armada, nothing of the ultimate glory of the great sovereign whom he so zealously served.

The era is dated from the first work of Spenser, who belonged wholly to the new school and who was destined to become one of the four great poets of the English race, but its opening notes were struck by Sidney.

1. Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586)

Authorities. The standard life of Sidney is **Fox Bourne,** *Memoir of Sir Philip Sidney.* The same au-

thor's *Sir Philip Sidney* in Heroes of the Nations Series, and **Symonds'** *Sir Philip Sidney* in the English Men of Letters Series, are the most serviceable works for the general student. The standard edition of Sidney's poems is **Grosart's**, a work indispensable to the student; but a good working edition is published in three volumes by the Scribners. See also **Davis,** *Life and Times of Sir Philip Sidney;* **Arber's** and **Cook's** editions of *The Defense of Poesy;* Scribner's edition of the *Arcadia;* **Welsh,** *English Masterpiece Course,* and **Minto,** Ch. iv. Sir Henry Sidney's letter to his son is in **Arber's** *English Garner,* Vol. i.

Few men in all history have left so deep an impress upon their times with so small a showing of brilliant and far-reaching accomplishment as Philip Sidney. In his own estimation at least, his whole brief career, which covered indeed only the first period of Elizabeth's reign, was but a time of preparation. When he fell at Zutphen he had but just entered upon his real life-work.

As the son of Sir Henry Sidney, Viceroy of Ireland, and as nephew of the powerful Earls of Warwick and Leicester, Sidney was early given every advantage. His education was carefully attended to. After several years at Oxford he was granted a license "to go abroad with three servants and four horses," and for the next three years he was busy with his studies in the leading European cities. He was in Paris during the massacre of St. Bartholomew; he was for nine months in Frankfort, where he had as master the celebrated Languet; he studied for eight months in Italy, and after a winter in Vienna he returned through the Low Countries to England to spend the greater part of his remaining years at the royal court. His ideal life was one of action; literature was but an avocation, a solace for idle hours; he longed to join in

the stirring life of the times, to sail into the Northwest with Frobisher or to the Spanish Main with Drake, but the Queen gave him little chance for action. She sent him on an embassy to the continent, and at length made him Governor of Flushing in the Netherlands, but it was his fate to fall in his first important engagement with the national foe.

With this slight record of actual achievement Sidney is the typical figure of a heroic age, one of the idols of the English nation. No man ever had a more perfect and lovable character, a more delightful personality. Over all who met him he cast a singular charm. None could know him and speak of him dispassionately. Queen Elizabeth, who was seldom mistaken in a man, declared him the jewel of her kingdom. William of Orange, the hero of the Netherlands, declared that "her Majesty had in Mr. Philip Sidney one of the ripest and greatest counsellors of State that lived in Europe." His death was a national bereavement. "It was accounted a sin," says a contemporary, "for any gentleman of quality, for months after, to appear at court or city in any light or gaudy apparel." "Volumes would be filled," says Fox Bourne, "were I to collect all the praise uttered in prose and still more extensively in verse, by Sir Philip Sidney's contemporaries or his immediate successors." And all this for a youth who died at thirty-two.

The Areopagus. It was almost inevitable that one of Sidney's temperament and training should be drawn toward literary work. As early as 1578 he had written a masque, *The Lady of the May*, to be acted before the Queen, and by the following year he was regarded by all as the foremost representative and patron of English let-

ters. Around him gathered a brilliant circle: Harvey, Grevil, afterwards Lord Brooke, Dyer, Spenser, and others,—"the Areopagus," whose function it was, in the words of Spenser, to proclaim "a general surceasing and silence of bald rhymers, and also of the very best too; instead whereof they have by authority of their whole senate, prescribed certain laws and rules of quantities of English syllables for English verse."

It is a somewhat startling thought that scarcely ten years before Spenser and Shakespeare and the whole school of Elizabethan poets were to put forth their immortal works, it was still a debatable question whether the old or the new prosody was to prevail. "The ancient," says Sidney, "marked the quantity of each syllable, and according to that framed his verse; the modern observing only number, with some regard to the accent, the chief life of it standeth in that like sounding of the words which we call rime. Whether of these be the most excellent would bear many speeches." He himself was inclined to compromise: "the English," he declares, "is fit for both sorts." Many of his songs and eclogues in the *Arcadia* are in the classic measures, but his sonnets, upon which his fame as a poet almost wholly rests, are in the modern form. Harvey stood uncompromisingly for the old meters. What English poetry would have been had his counsel prevailed may be seen in Stanyhurst's translation of the *Æneid* (1582), "one of the most grotesque books in the English language" (Arber's ed.). Spenser fell for a time under the influence of the Areopagus, but he soon broke away, and his work, together with Sidney's incomparable sonnets, set the standard for all later poetry.

Astrophel and Stella. Sidney's literary product consists of three works: *The Defense of Poesy*, the *Arcadia*, a long romance, and *Astrophel and Stella*, a sonnet sequence; and the greater part of this product was written in the three years following 1580, "in these my not old years and idlest times." In the sonnets, which are his supreme achievement, he was a true Courtly Maker. What Wyatt saw afar off Sidney accomplished. Wyatt, rude and unskilled, using an instrument not his own, had tried to voice the song in his heart, and despite his crudeness and imitation we feel as we read him the thrill of an honest passion, deep and sad. In Sidney the thrill is more intense. Here we have perfect mastery of technique without a trace of imitation. Every sonnet deepens the impression that the poet had obeyed his Muse:

> Fool, said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write;

and that this is the record of an honest heart written because

> Love doth hold my hand and make me write.

We need not search the lives of Sidney to find the facts as to Stella—we shall settle nothing if we do. The poem is enough. No one can read it through and doubt that the poet was

> Loving in truth and fain in verse my love to show
> That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain.

It is the full story of a hopeless passion, and it holds some of the most impassioned, some of the saddest, some of the sweetest sonnets in the language. Such sonnets as "With what sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the

skies," and "Come sleep! O sleep," and "O joy too high for my low style to show," mark the highest sweep of the English love sonnet. "As a series of sonnets," says Ward, "the *Astrophel and Stella* poems are second only to Shakespeare's; as a series of love poems they are, perhaps, unsurpassed."

The influence of this first sequence of sonnets was widespread and immediate. Following the publication of *Astrophel and Stella* in 1591 there came, as we shall see, the greatest sonnet era in the history of English literature. All of the early Elizabethan poets, Daniel, Drayton, Lodge, Chapman, Spenser, and Shakespeare, tried their hand at the making of sequences, and in all of their sonnets there is the spirit of the first master. What Sidney might have become had he lived to fulfil the promise of his young manhood it is idle to conjecture. It is enough to say that had Spenser or Shakespeare died at thirty-two they would have left not much more than he. Even as it is he must be reckoned with as one of the great influences in the history of English poetry.

REQUIRED READING. Spenser, "Astrophel", *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnets 1, 23, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39, 48, 87, 90, 92, 107; *Golden Treasury*, xxxii., xlvii. Also "A Dirge" and "Philomela." The selections in Schelling, *Elizabethan Lyrics* are excellent, also those in Ward, *English Poets*.

2. *Edmund Spenser (1552–1599)*

Authorities. The leading authority on Spenser and his works is **Grosart's** edition of Spenser,—a somewhat rare book. **Craik**, *Spenser and his Poetry;* the Globe edition of the poet, edited by **Morris**, with a memoir by **Hales**; the Riverside edition by **Professor Child**; the

Aldine edition by **Collier**; and the essay by **Lowell** in Vol. iv. of his works, are indispensable authorities. The best working edition is the Aldine; the most satisfactory life of Spenser for the general student is **Church's** in the English Men of Letters Series. **Fleay,** *Guide to Chaucer and Spenser;* **Dowden,** *Transcripts and Studies;* **Gummere,** *Selections from Spenser,* Ath. Press Series (announced); **Kitchin,** *Faerie Queene,* Books i. and ii. (Clarendon Press Series), and **Philips,** *English Literature,* should be consulted. For a complete bibliography, see **Carpenter,** *Guide to the Study of Spenser;* **Welsh,** *English Masterpiece Course,* and **Winchester,** *Short Courses of Reading.*

The life of Spenser, though he lived two centuries nearer our own day, is well-nigh as unknown to us as that of Chaucer. A few dates from the Cambridge records, the Stationer's Register,and the State Rolls; a few letters and autobiographic poems; a few writings of contemporaries, and the rest is tradition and conjecture. Elaborate lives have been written after the method described by Henry James,—" A thin soil of historical evidence is made to produce luxuriant flowers of deduction,"—but through them all the poet moves as a cold, shadowy figure, never clearly seen, often hopelessly obscured. Only once or twice, as in *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, *Amoretti*, and *Epithalamion*, do we seem to get near him, but at best we find that we have caught only a glimpse. His life was of a piece with his great poem,—vague and unreal,—and his death was of a piece with his life. " The whole story of his later days," says Lowell, " has a strong savor of legend."

The time and place of Spenser's birth, and the facts as to his family, are unrecorded, but in his poem *Prothalamion* he speaks of

> Merry London, my most kindly nurse,
> That to me gave this life's first kindly source,
> Though from another place I take my name,
> An house of ancient fame ;

and in a sonnet written not far from 1593, he declares that the past year has seemed longer to him

> Then al those fourty which my life outwent.

On such evidence rests the birth date, 1552. The next that we know of Spenser is in 1569, when he was entered at Cambridge as a free student. Four years later he received the first degree, and three years later still, in 1576, he became master of arts and left the university. Again for three years we know little about him, though *The Shepheardes Calender* has been made by some to yield a full account of the period. While at Cambridge he had become the close friend of Gabriel Harvey, whose curious efforts to reform English prosody have already been noticed. After Spenser left the university the two friends seem to have carried on a voluminous correspondence, a part of which has been preserved, and from this it appears that Spenser some time previous to 1579 had gone to London to join the circle about the brilliant Sidney, and that the two from the first had been strongly drawn toward each other. The influence of the great courtier upon the poet was a strong one. It was Sidney, he declared,

> Who first my muse did lift out of the flore
> To sing his sweet delights in lowlie laies.

To him, " the noble and vertuous gentleman, most worthy of all titles both of learning and chevalrie," Spen-

ser dedicated his maiden volume, *The Shepheardes Calender*, which, appearing in 1579, announced to the world the advent of a new poet.

On the following year Spenser went to Ireland as Secretary to Lord Grey, and during the next ten years we lose sight of him almost altogether. In 1590 he was living quietly on the large estate at Kilcolman which had been granted him by the English government, and here it was that Raleigh found him, as related in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. Spenser declares that one day while

> Keeping my sheepe amongst the cooly shade
> Of the green alders by the Mullaes shore,
> A strange shepheard chaunst to find me out. . . .
> He, sitting me beside in that same shade,
> Provoked me to plaie some pleasant fit;
> And when he heard the musicke which I made,
> He found himself full greatly pleased with it.

The music was nothing less than the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*, and after the "Shepheard of the Ocean," who was none other than Raleigh, had heard it all

> He gan to cast great lyking to my lore,
>   And great dislyking to my lucklesse lot,
> That banisht had myselfe, like wight forlore,
>   Into that waste, where I was quite forgot.
> The which to leave thenceforth he counseld mee,
>   Unmeet for man in whom was ought regardfull,
> And wend with him his Cynthia to see,
>   Whose grace was great, and bounty most rewardfull.

The result was a journey to London, where after reading his new poem to the Queen, who was delighted with it, he published it with due pomp in 1591, inscribed "to the most high and mighty and magnificent empresse, re-

nowmed for pietie, vertue, and all gratious government, Elizabeth, . . . to live with the eternitie of her fame." The popularity of the poem was immediate and unprecedented. Spenser returned to Ireland with the plaudits of his countrymen, and, what was to him of equal importance, a goodly pension from the Queen, who had indeed proved "most rewardfull." In 1594 he married very happily, and he celebrated the event with *Amoretti*, a sonnet sequence after the style of Sidney, and *Epithalamion*, the most magnificent wedding ode in the language. Two years later he crossed to England again with three more books of *The Faerie Queene*, which were published in 1596. But life at the royal court, to judge from his poems, was never congenial. He soon returned to "the salvage soyl" which had doubtless become dear to him, and there he lived until the Tyrone rebellion of 1598 destroyed his home and sent him flying into England to die, soon after, an obscure and untimely death.

His Minor Poems. So completely does Spenser's *Faerie Queene* overshadow his other work that, like Chaucer, he lives in most minds as the creator of a single poem. But it must not be forgotten that he published during his lifetime no less than eight volumes of poetry besides *The Faerie Queene;* that some of these, like *Complaints*, for instance, which contains nine long pieces, are sizable books, and that much of this poetry is on a level with the best work in his great masterpiece.

1579. The Shepheardes Calender.
1591. Complaints.
1591. Daphnaida.
1595. Astrophel.
1595. Amoretti and Epithalamion.
1596. Colin Clouts Come Home.
1596. Four Hymns.
1596. Prothalamion.

The Shepheardes Calender, Spenser's first significant publication, is a series of twelve eclogues or pastorals,

one for each month of the year. The pleasant fiction of poetic shepherds piping to their flocks "on oaten quill," and leading them with song and dance through flowery meads and downs, a fiction as old as poetry itself, seems greatly to have impressed the imagination of Spenser. In all of his poetry to the very last he speaks of himself as

> The shepheardes boy, best knowen by that name,

and he alludes to his poems, even to *The Faerie Queene,* though in much of it he is enforced

> For trumpets sterne to change mine Oaten reeds,

as pastoral lays, the pipings of his shepherd hours. To him it was a world of shepherds; "'the fair Eliza' is the queen of shepherds all; her great father is Pan, the shepherd's god," and all about her are shepherds, whose one delight it is

> to blow
> Their pipes aloud, her name to glorifie.

With this loose thread are bound together the twelve poems, which otherwise differ greatly both as to subject and merit. Some are romantic songs full of youth and extravagance; some are translations or imitations of Theocritus and the Latin pastorals; some are fables and burlesques; three of them are religious satires which show the poet's early bent toward Puritanism. Everywhere in them are manifest the exuberant fancy and extravagance of a youthful dreamer who knows more of Theocritus and Virgil than of actual life, and who believes himself hopelessly and delightfully in love. But notwithstanding this, notwithstanding the archaic affectation complained

of by Sidney, *The Shepheardes Calender* is a most remarkable work. The poems are full of the sweet music now so familiar in *The Faerie Queene*, and they show a sustained poetic power seldom found in a poet's first volume.

We need not wander long among the minor poems. With the land of *The Faerie Queene* before us we are inclined to view all else with impatience. But some of the rarest of the shorter poems must not be passed over, for they alone would have established their maker as a poet of high rank. "The satirical fable, *Mother Hubberd's Tale of the Ape and the Fox*," says one critic, "may take rank with the satirical writings of Chaucer and Dryden for keenness of touch, for breadth of treatment, for swing and fiery scorn, and sustained strength of sarcasm." It shows us the dark side of Elizabeth's court, and it hints strongly at the poet's disgust at all that pertained to the brilliant yet hollow and uncertain life of the courtier. For what is life at court but

> To loose good dayes, that might be better spent;
> To wast long nights in pensive discontent;
> To speed to day, to be put back to morrow;
> To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow;
> To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres;
> To have thy asking, yet waite manie yeeres;
> To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;
> To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaires;
> To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne,
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undonne?

The *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, written to Raleigh after Spenser's return to his Irish home, gives us another glimpse into the poet's heart, yet we are never sure of what we see, so cumbered is the tale with artificial imagery. It is in the poems that followed Spenser's mar-

riage in 1596 that we seem to get nearest to him. The *Amoretti*, the sonnet cycle that tells in detail the whole history of his love affair, is full of tenderness and passion, though it falls far short of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, but the magnificent wedding ode, *Epithalamion*, in its spontaneous joy and exultation, its tenderness and truth, its rapt passion and its purity, stands at the head of all Spenser's poetry. It is the world's wedding ode, as Mendelssohn's great creation is the world's wedding march. Open it at random and note the joy, the passion, the sweet music.

> Now al is done; bring home the bride againe;
> Bring home the triumph of our victorie;
> Bring home with you the glory of her gaine,
> With joyance bring her and with jollity.
> Never had man more joyfull day then this,
> Whom heaven would heape with blis. . . .
> Ring ye the bels, ye yong men of the towne;
> And leave your wonted labors for this day:
> This day is holy; doe ye write it downe,
> That ye forever it remember may.

The Faerie Queene. But the minor poems of Spenser, however exquisite, were, after all, but recreations of his Muse. The real work of his life was his great allegory, *The Faerie Queene*. We know from one of Harvey's letters that the poet had begun upon this masterpiece even before the publication of *The Shepheardes Calender*, and we also know that he spent all the rest of his life in elaborating and extending it. The poem, therefore, stands as peculiarly the life-work of Spenser. The dream of his young manhood had taken so firm a grasp upon him that it ruled his whole career. The poem, even to its end, is

the vision of a young man: all of its heroes are in the prime of youth, "full of lusty life," teeming with strength, eager for adventure; its heroines are all maidens, depicted *con amore*, full of life, and "faire as ever living wight was faire"; its atmosphere is one of infinite hope and boundless possibility; its rewards and punishments are absolutely just,—all comes out divinely right. It is not hard to find what gave the young poet his dream and what kept his song young even to the last. He was but voicing the hope, the youth, the dreams of his young nation, now in the first flush of its manhood. The Faerie Queene is none other than Elizabeth, the

> Goddesse heavenly bright,
> Mirrour of grace, and majesty divine,
> Great Ladie of the greatest Isle, whose light
> Like Phœbus lamp throughout the world doth shine;

the magnificence, the costly furnishings, "with royal arras and resplendent gold," is but a reflection of the gorgeous court of the Queen; the monsters and miracles are but commonplaces when compared with the nation's dream of America and the unknown seas; the knights are but Sidney and Raleigh in disguise; the chivalry, the boundless hope, the restless longing for adventure are but the spirit of the age. What Spenser dreamed, Drake put into living deeds.

As we study the plan of *The Faerie Queene* and mark the vastness of its foundations, we are impressed first of all by the tremendous enthusiasm and confidence of the young poet who could deliberately begin such a work. The poem as we have it consists of six books, each divided into twelve long cantos, but the part that was finished is but a fragment of what the poet projected. We learn from the

letter to Raleigh that there were to have been twelve books in the first part, each of which was to show forth one of "the twelve private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised, the which is the purpose of these twelve books: which if I find to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encouraged to frame the other part of politic vertues." "Thus we have," says Church, "but a fourth part of the whole of the projected work." The first three books, as we learn from the introductory letter, recount the adventures of three knights: "The first of the Knight of the Redcrosse, in whom I expresse Holines: the seconde of Sir Guyon, in whome I set foorth Temperaunce: the third of Britomartis, a Lady knight, in whom I picture Chastity." The remaining books treat respectively of Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy.

This element of allegory must be fully appreciated or *The Faerie Queene* will become a vast phantasmagoria of

> Kings, queenes, lords, ladies, knights, and damsels gent,

thrown with endless confusion into a wilderness of strange creatures, the dreams of every race and age. No one, after reading Spenser's letter to Raleigh, can wander far into the poem without the conviction that the author's central purpose was didactic, almost as much as was Bunyan's in *Pilgrim's Progress*. The poem is, as Milton declares, a song

> Of turneys and of trophies hung,
> Of forests and enchantments drear,
> Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Literature produced for the mere love of creating the beautiful was unknown in Spenser's day. The work of art, it was thought, must teach its lesson; must have its

aim clearly evident. That Spenser regarded the most of his works as moral exercises we have abundant evidence. He declares of his poems in *Complaints* that they are "all complaints and meditations on the world's vanity, verie grave and profitable." Of *The Faerie Queene* he declares that

> The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline. Which for that I conceived should be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for varietie of matter then for profite of the ensample.

The fanciful creations, the teeming world of myths and monsters, the atmosphere of chivalry and romance, were, therefore, only an outward dress to render attractive certain moral lessons. *The Faerie Queene* was to be a series of sermons on holiness, temperance, chastity, and kindred virtues. In the first book of the poem the allegory is well-nigh as evident as it is in Bunyan. The book is a unity, complete in itself—indeed each of the six books stands in reality independent of the others. The young knight, "true in deede and word," who ever as he rode did yearn

> To prove his puissance in battell brave
> Upon his foe, a Dragon horrible and stearne,

represents a human soul just starting in the holy life. His foe is the arch-enemy of holiness; the plain, with its vague scenery and its varied life, is the world. The youth sets out with light heart, "led with delight,"

> Joying to heare the birdes sweete harmony,

his companions Truth and Innocence; but soon a storm drives him from the narrow path. Wandering in search of the way he falls in with Error, whom he overcomes. He is deceived by Hypocrisy, who separates him from Truth and Innocence; is stained by Falsehood, and at length is almost destroyed by Pride. But by the aid of Truth, who at last finds him, he escapes, feeble and emaciated, from Pride's dungeons, only to fall in with Despair, who counsels suicide. Again rescued by his good angel, he seeks the house of Holiness, where he is refreshed and disciplined by Faith, Hope, and Charity, until at last he is ready to meet and overcome the last great enemy, the dragon that he had started out to destroy. The book is full of sermons, thinly concealed, Puritanic in their earnestness. What preacher could surpass the earnest words in Canto x, or what Puritan could draw a more doleful picture of the vanities of human life than that presented by Despair in Canto ix? Despite its mythology and its sensuous beauty the poem is Puritan at heart. There is no laughter; it is as serious and as earnest as *Paradise Lost*.

But the allegory grows more and more obscure after the first book. "Many other adventures," says the poet, "are intermeddled, but," he naïvely adds, "rather as accidents than intendents. As the love of Britomart, the overthrow of Florimell, the vertuousness of Belphœbe, and many the like." These accidents increase with every book. The poet's love of the merely beautiful, his passion for the poetic and the romantic, tempt him constantly from his task. The poem becomes more and more vague and discursive. Having chosen his course, the poet seems to have had no power to hold his helm steadily to the

goal. He wanders everywhere; we are never sure of where we are to go next or what we are to see. We lose sight of the allegory completely and surrender ourselves to the charm of the movement and the sweetness of the music. In the later books the poem is like a gorgeous dream. Fantastic figures come without warning, whirl wildly for a moment, and disappear. The tale moves merrily for a time; our interest is awakened, we read breathlessly—it is broken never to be resumed. The sorely tried couple Amoret and Scudamour enlist our sympathies. They are ever on the verge of a joyous meeting, but they never find each other in Spenser's tale; Britomart never weds the Knight of Justice; the fair Una is forsaken and forgotten.

The poem is a vast picture gallery, unclassified, chaotic, teeming with treasures. Never was there such an embarrassing wealth of beauty,—old masters retouched, new creations, sketches and studies with subjects drawn from every realm of imaginative art, ancient and modern: dragons, giants, enchanters, personified virtues and vices, mermaids, witches, satyrs, gods, monsters in every shape, enchanted castles, descents into Avernus, everywhere the machinery of knight-errantry, and over it all the romantic light of the vanishing Middle Ages. With what master strokes are painted such creations as the description of the house of Morpheus, the cave of Despair, the castle of Pride, the punishment of Tantalus, the song of the Mermaids, the fight between Artagall and Britomart,—there is no end to the list. Each picture is elaborated with infinite art; we can stand and admire it indefinitely; but the vastness of the collection at length confuses us. We wander enchanted for a time, but the very richness of the

gallery is wearisome. To get the most from it one must come in the right mood, and wander at leisure. After the first book one may open at random,—few ever attempt to read consecutively the whole poem.

It is an easy task to criticise *The Faerie Queene*,—its vagueness of landscape, its unreality, and exaggeration. Fair Una rode a beast " more white than snow, yet she much whiter." Arthur's shield shone so exceeding bright that it dimmed the sun as if a cloud had passed. In Shakespeare we meet with creations that are true at every point to human nature. We think of them and talk of them as if they had been a part of our own experience; but in Spenser we seldom touch the earth at all. His creations force their unreality upon us at every step. But we must remember constantly Spenser's environment. The audience for whom he wrote must be considered. Never has a poet been allowed more license. The English imagination in the early Elizabethan days, stimulated as it was by the dreams of the new world and by the deeds of the sea-kings, demanded marvelous tales. No exaggeration could be too wild; no landscape too unreal; no adventure too improbable. It must be remembered, too, that the poem was created in a land as chaotic and lawless as any in *The Faerie Queene*. In the words of his biographer

> In Ireland he had before his eyes continually that dreary world which the poet of knight-errantry imagines. There men might in good truth travel long through wildernesses and " great woods " given over to the outlaw and the ruffian. There the avenger of wrong need seldom want for perilous adventure and the occasion for quelling the oppressor. There the armed and unrelenting hand of right was but too truly the only substitute for law. There might be found in most certain and prosaic reality, the ambushes, the disguises, the treacheries, the deceits and temptations, even

the supposed witchcrafts and enchantments, against which the fairy champions of the virtues have to be on their guard.

Ireland was still in the Middle Ages. Everything around the poet kindled his imagination. His home on the Mulla, " under the foote of Mole, that mountain hoar," on the edge of a dark forest in which lurked unknown terrors, was a perfect spot for the creation of a poem like *The Faerie Queene*. " It might almost be called the epic of the English wars in Ireland under Elizabeth."

The chief excellencies of Spenser are the richness and power of his conceptions, the sweet poetic atmosphere everywhere in his work, and the dreamy melody of his music. The story does not long hold us. When once we know that the lance is charmed, or the shield invincible, the tales of combat cease to be absorbing. The plot does not work to a climax. At times we seem to be making progress, but we soon discover that there is no fixed destination. But the mere power of the poet's conceptions and the sweetness of his music hold us on and on. What swing and force in a picture like this:

> Which when that Champion heard, with percing point
>   Of pitty deare his hart was thrilled sore,
> And trembling horrour ran through every joynt
>   For ruth of gentle knight so fowle forlore :
>   Which shaking off, he rent that yron dore,
> With furious force, and indignation fell ;
>   Where entered in, his foot could find no flore,
> But all a deepe descent, as darke as hell,
> That breathed ever forth a filthie baneful smell.

What " dreamy, melodious softness " in the song of the sirens:

O thou fair son of gentle Faëry,
  Thou art in mighty arms most magnified
  Above all knights that ever battell tried :
O turn thy rudder hitherward awhile !
  Here may thy storm-beat vessel safely ride ;
This is the port of rest from troublous toil,
The world's sweet inn from paine and wearisome turmoil.

Open at random. The sweet stanzas hold you and the vivid pictures thrill you. Never before had it been dreamed that there was so much music in the English tongue. In Spenser's hands it became as liquid as the Italian.

This, then, is Spenser. Seen in the light of his whole work he stands as a transition figure, one that would have been impossible a few years earlier or later. His great poem belongs, in the words of Bascom, "in type and form to the tedious and dreary works of a retreating age." The poet stands at the opening of the new era but he looks dreamily backward. Shakespeare belonged wholly to the present. To him the past and future were significant only so far as they could interpret the present moment. Milton's eyes were fixed steadfastly on the future. These were the three stages of the great creative era. But Spenser was not lost in the past. He was peculiarly the product of his age. He had a message for his times and he looked often into the future. He was the first great English poet in the modern sense, and his work has colored all subsequent English poetry.

REQUIRED READING. To get an adequate conception of Spenser one should read at least the first book of *The Faerie Queene*. For the general student Kitchin's edition (Clarendon Press) and Kate M. Warren's edition are extremely helpful.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN POETS

Authorities. **Palgrave,** *Golden Treasury;* **Bullen,** *Lyrics from the Elizabethan Age*, three series; **Main,** *English Sonnets;* **Schelling,** *Elizabethan Lyrics* (Athenæum Press Series); **Garrett,** *Elizabethan Songs;* **Bullen,** *England's Helicon;* **Drake,** *Shakespeare and his Times;* **Gosse,** *Jacobean Poets;* **Arber,** *English Garner*, which contains most of the sonnet cycles; **Crow,** *Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences;* **Chappel,** *Popular Music in the Olden Time;* **Minto,** *English Poets;* **Saintsbury,** *Elizabethan Literature.*

The Sonneteers. The suddenness of the outburst of lyric poetry that followed in 1591 the publication of *Astrophel and Stella*, together with its volume and its excellence, may be counted as one of the most remarkable phenomena in English literary history. The first rush of this poetic flood brought almost nothing but sonnets. In the five years following the publication of Sidney's work no less than sixteen sequences of sonnets, all of them dedicated to some faultless maiden with a classic name, and all of them showing more or less the influence of Sidney and of Italian models, were entered upon the Stationer's Register. Their popularity was unbounded; they were republished, many of them, again and again, and they soon began to take

1592. Daniel's Delia. Constable's Diana.
1593. Lodge's Phillis. Watson's Tears of Fancy. Barnes' Parthenophil and Parthenophe. Fletcher's Licia.
1594. Percy's Cœlia. Drayton's Idea's Mirror. The majority of Shakespeare's Sonnets written. Zepheria (anonymous).
1595. Barnfield's Cynthia. Chapman's A Coronet, etc.

Barnes' A Divine Century, etc. 1596. Griffin's Fidessa. Smith's Chloris. Lynche's Diella. Spenser's Amoretti.

among English readers the place so long held by the Italian and French translations. The sonnet era was quickly followed by a burst of romantic, patriotic, and miscellaneous song, until England was in very truth " a nest of singing birds."

The leading causes of this outburst are not hard to discover. Lyric poetry is almost wholly subjective. The poet voices his own joy or pain, his aspirations and hopes, his fears, his complaints, his despair. Its basis is the individual; it emphasizes not the mass but the unit. The spontaneous outpouring of lyric song in the days of Elizabeth marks the rise of individual consciousness. During all the Middle Ages the unit had been forgotten, but now a new age was dawning which recognized the rights of the individual and listened to his complaint. But these lyrics are more than mere personal cries. They are voices of young men: on every line are stamped the passion, the exuberance, the extravagance of youth. They teem with vitality and health; seldom is there a morbid strain or a minor note. Nothing could be more natural, more inevitable. They are the strong voice of a young nation, just conscious of its power, turbulent often, reckless and headstrong, romantic and full of dreams, brimming over with hope and joy and mere sensuous delight.

The very suddenness of the outburst may in some degree be explained. The growth of the lyric spirit had been a gradual one. The period between 1557 and 1591 had been a time of growing poetic achievement. Since the days of Wyatt the young nobility had been educated in Italy and France. They knew by heart the fashionable amoretti of the romance world, and they translated

and imitated freely, but with rare exceptions they published nothing. It was considered vulgar to print. Says Puttenham in his *Arte of Poetry*, published in 1589: "I know very many notable gentlemen in the court that have written commendably and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be published without their names to it: as if it were a discredit for a gentleman to seem learned and to show himself amorous of any good Art." The poems of Raleigh, for instance, which included the magnificent *Cynthia*, declared by Spenser to be a rival to *The Faerie Queene*, were not published during Elizabethan days, and now only a pitiful fragment remains. The dainty manuscripts of these court singers circulated among choice groups of friends, and it was only by accident that a sonnet descended to the vulgarity of print. The poems of Wyatt and Surrey, long after the death of their makers, had been rescued and given to the public in *Tottel's Miscellany*, and their popularity, even among the common people, ever curious to catch a glimpse into aristocratic life, had tempted others to make collections. But by far the greater number of poems in the four miscellanies printed previous to 1591, and indeed in all the miscellanies, are anonymous.

It is certain that Sidney no more wrote his *Astrophel and Stella* for the general public than he did his love letters. The book was printed almost surreptitiously by Nashe, who, after Sidney's death, had secured the manuscript and had added to it "sundry other rare sonnets of divers noblemen and gentlemen." Twenty-seven of these "rare sonnets" had been boldly taken from the manuscripts of Samuel Daniel, who, being abroad, was of course ignorant of the outrage. To set himself right

before the world, Daniel, upon his return to England, immediately published his sonnet sequence *Delia,* and emboldened by this the poet Constable in the same year put forth his *Diana.* The fact that Spenser had given to the public his great allegory, that the friends of the noble Sidney could permit a publication of his sonnets, and that such men as Daniel and Constable had " thought far more of their art than their nobility," gave literature all at once a social reputation. Publication became immediately fashionable, and the era of the sonnet cycles was the result.

The characteristics of the early sonneteers need not be dwelt upon. One need read only *Astrophel and Stella,* the parent of the sequences, and *Amoretti,* after Sidney's the most poetic of them all, to understand the whole series. The rest are but variations more or less excellent.

The Lyric Era (1591–1625). When we examine the collections of early English lyrics we find that by far the greater number of them were produced during a single generation. It was the most fruitful era of song that England has ever known, and yet the lyric was only one phase of the poetic activity of the age. After the episode of the sonnet sequences, lyric song became to a large degree sporadic in its production. Almost all of the Elizabethans, even the practical and prosaic Bacon, tried at one time or another their skill at the lyric pipe. The inditing of songs became the avocation of poets. Everywhere we find them,—little love strains, artless and impassioned, rollicking songs, madrigals, and merry dances. We find them prefaced to the publications of the period; we find them written by diamond on window-panes; we rescue them from ponderous books of verse where they

lie crushed like dainty flowers; and everywhere through the great mass of tragedy and comedy they sparkle merrily like the gems that they are. But in an age distinctively lyrical we find no distinctively lyrical master; no one who, like Herrick in later days, was nothing if not a singer. The most exquisite of the songs were made by poets who were but incidentally lyrists, like Shakespeare and Dekker and Greene.

The lyric era was surprisingly brief. "By the year 1625," says Schelling, "almost every lyrist of importance who had written in the reign of Elizabeth, had either completed his best work or ceased altogether to write." But the poetic product was by no means small. The very abundance of material is positively embarrassing. One is well-nigh forced into silence by the very vastness of the field, for the various collections from this period "represent," says Saintsbury, "such a body of verse as probably could not be got together, with the same origin and circumstances, in any quarter-century of any nation's history since the foundation of the world." While there is much that is inferior and even worthless, the average, measured by any standard, is surprisingly high; and there are in the collection not a few lyrics that rank with the brightest gems of the world's literature.

REQUIRED READINGS. The very least that a student may read are the lyrics of the era in *The Golden Treasury*. Every one, if possible, should read through such a collection as Schelling's *Elizabethan Lyrics* (Ath. Press).

Popular Ballads. Nor was the lyric impulse confined to the upper classes. It was an era prolific in what Puttenham describes as "vulgar makings." Music was everywhere. "The England of Elizabeth," says Gum-

mere, who bases the statement upon Chappell, "surpassed both Italy and France in the matter of music. High and low, every one loved to sing; every one was expected to take part, even in difficult songs; and the very barber kept in his shop lute, cittern, or virginal for the amusement of waiting customers. Music was everywhere and everywhere were songs." Many of the ballads in our modern collections—simple and stirring, full of the odor of the vague past, relics of the old native minstrelsy—were made at this time. It was the golden age of the wassailing song, the merry dancing strain, and the ballad of current happenings. Every event in an era that teemed with great deeds was put into ballad form to be hawked about the London streets and sung at every convivial gathering. Shakespeare sends us for songs "old and plain" to

> The spinsters and the knitters in the sun.

The ballad filled in a way the place now occupied by the daily paper. No happening was too trivial for its notice; "Scarce a cat can look out of a gutter," says an old writer, "but presently a proper new ballet of a strange sight is indited." That the greater part of such poetry should be worthless was inevitable, yet here and there in the mass of faded and dusty broadsides that have come down to us there is a true ballad worth a hundred Italianate sonnets. Without this popular note the literature of the age of Elizabeth would have been almost wholly aristocratic.

REQUIRED READINGS. "Captain Car," "The Baron of Brackley," "Young Waters," etc., Gummere, *Old English Ballads.*

Elizabethan and Jacobean Poets. But by far the leading poetic product of the age, in mass at least, remains to be considered. After the great success of Spenser it was believed that to attain a permanent literary fame one must produce a long poem. The early dramatists were all poets. The drama was as yet uncertain; its production was simply a matter of business; often it required but a working over of old material, and furthermore it catered only to the passing hour; but true poetry was for all time. Thus Shakespeare expended the greatest care upon his long romantic poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and Marlowe sought to make his fame secure with the sweet and sensuous *Hero and Leander.* It was a time of vast poetic attempts like the *Albion's England* of Warner, which endeavored to tell in verse the entire history of Britain from the creation of the world; and the *Civil Wars* of Daniel, and the huge *Polyolbion* of Drayton.

To classify this vast mass of poetry, beginning with lyrics and running down the whole poetic gamut, has been often attempted. Brooke detects three divisions, "each corresponding to phases in the growth of the Elizabethan mind." The lyric outburst marks the period of eager youth; the patriotic era with its histories and its great interest in England's past, marks the time of maturity; while the last phase, the era of philosophic and reflective poems, denotes the time of old age and decline. Such a generalization, though based upon the truth, is at best but vague and unpractical. All three varieties of poetry were making at the same time. The satires and funeral elegies of Donne were contemporaneous with Spenser and the first lyric outburst. In so short a period lines cannot be drawn with precision. It is better with Gosse

to make an arbitrary division at the death of Elizabeth, and form only two general periods, the Elizabethan and the Jacobean. While there is no literary reason why 1603 should be chosen, yet a comparison of the poetry produced ten years before this date with that produced ten years later shows, if we examine the whole poetic product, that a marked change had taken place, and the date seems to be a convenient dividing line.

The period of lyric inspiration reached its culminating point in 1600 with the publication of *England's Helicon*, "one of the richest and most inspired collections of miscellaneous verse ever published in any country or at any time." From this point the early lyrists began to drop off one by one and English poetry became more and more serious, until at length it could even ridicule the pastoral sweetness and extravagance of the first singers. Of the distinctly Elizabethan poets, Sidney and Spenser are the most perfect types; of the Jacobean group, Donne is doubtless the best representative. Two other poets, Drayton and Daniel, are also typical figures, since their work belongs to both periods. Beginning at the very dawn of the lyric era they worked through nearly the whole reign of James, and illustrated in their poetry almost every phase of Elizabethan and Jacobean song.

1. Samuel Daniel (1562–1619)

"The well-languaged Daniel."

Authorities. The complete works of the poet are not easily accessible to all students. They are included in **Chalmers'** *British Poets*, and there is a complete edition by **Grosart.** The *Delia* cycle of sonnets is reprinted in **Arber,** *English Garner*, Vol. iii.

The lives of nearly all of the Elizabethan poets were stormy and eventful. They were a restless, impetuous group of young men who plunged eagerly into the activities of a most active age. We read the romances of Lodge, and know that they were written in the Straits of Magellan, and that "every line was wet with a surge, and every humorous passion counter-checked with a storm." We wander with Raleigh in desperate adventure on the Spanish Main or in the Irish wilds; we follow Southwell on his hazardous mission that brought him to the rack and the scaffold; we "trail a pike" with Churchyard in the English wars; we follow into exile the unhappy Constable, and we mark the steps of that wild crew which, headed by Marlowe and Greene, held high revelry in the London inns.

Among such a throng the gentle Daniel, "right minded and right hearted," the Wordsworth of the Elizabethans, seems singularly out of place. As we read his smooth lines, his gentle meditations and moralizings, we seem to have wandered into the next century. In him we find the first signs of decadence, "the first example of poetry beginning to wither on the bough."

The work of Daniel shows every phase of poetic change from the first youth of the creative era to its moralizing old age. His earliest work is purely Elizabethan. He caught the exultation, the rapture, of the first lyric outburst. His *Delia*, the second of the sonnet cycles, contains some of the finest work of the period; indeed, the 45th of the series, "Care charmer sleep," is one of the few perfect sonnets in the language. The exhilaration of the great era seems for a time to have intoxicated him:

> The pulse of England never more did beat
> So strong as now ; nor ever were our hearts
> Let out to hopes so spacious and so great
> As now they are.

The spirit of intense patriotism was upon him as it was upon so many of the young poets of the time. England had awakened to a realization of her own great past, and her poets longed, like Warner,

> To write the gestes of Britons stout,
> And actes of English men.

England must have an epic commensurate with her glory, and native both in theme and scene. We have only to glance through (life is too short to read them entire) such ponderous works as Warner's *Albion's England*, Daniel's *Civil Wars between Lancaster and York*, and Drayton's *Barons' Wars* and *Polyolbion* to realize fully the spirit of boundless enthusiasm and of unlimited ambition that filled the " spacious times of great Elizabeth." There is but one parallel in literary history, and that is where, in the early years of the American republic, Joel Barlow by sheer force tried to create an epic that should be commensurate with the hope and the glory of America. But Daniel's vast poem is not now counted with the great epics; no one reads it. It has little movement and almost no poetic fire. The poet moves leisurely, tracing at length the causes of the great drama, dwelling upon the actors, omitting all battle-scenes, all spirited action, and moralizing freely, until at last, just before the battle of Tewkesbury, he drops his pen as if weary himself of the interminable tale. But the poem is far from being worthless. Its limpid lines, its ease and grace, its gentle, con-

templative atmosphere, are almost enough to balance its great defects.

When the poet, putting aside his epic tale, devoted himself to purely contemplative verse he did by far his most charming work. In *Musophilus*, in *Hymen's Triumph*, and the *Epistle to the Countess of Cumberland* we seem to get close to the poet's heart. One has to read but little from these poems, especially from the *Epistle*, to know the sweet contemplative nature of the man, and to realize why he stole away from the royal court where he so long had been a favorite, to spend the autumn of his days in the seclusion of the country. A single stanza of the *Epistle* throws more light upon the poet's nature than would a whole chapter of commentary.

Daniel is not a great figure among the Elizabethan poets, but the sweetness and strength of his style and the gentle meditative atmosphere of his poems give him a peculiar charm. Coleridge was delighted with the old poet. "Read Daniel," was his advice, "the admirable Daniel," and other poets and critics have heartily concurred. Lowell's criticism is a very happy one.

> Writing two hundred and fifty years ago, he stands in no need of a glossary, and I have noted scarce a dozen words, and not more turns of phrase, in his works, that have become obsolete. This certainly indicates both remarkable taste and equally remarkable judgment. There is a conscious dignity in his thought and sentiment such as we rarely meet. His best poems always remind me of a table-land, where, because all is so level, we are apt to forget on how lofty a plane we are standing. I think his *Musophilus* the best poem of its kind in the language. The reflections are natural, the expression condensed, the thought weighty, and the language worthy of it. But he wasted himself on an historical poem, in which the characters were incapable of that remoteness from ordinary associations which is essential to the ideal.

REQUIRED READING. The student should read the selections in *The Golden Treasury*, Schelling, *Elizabethan Lyrics*, and Ward, *English Poets*.

2. *Michael Drayton (1563–1631)*

Authorities. **Chalmers'** *British Poets* of course includes Drayton. The most accessible edition of Drayton's poetical works is that in the Library of Old Authors, 3 vols. The most recent edition of the poet's works is **Hooper's** (not yet complete). Vol. vi. of the *English Garner* contains the *Idea* sequence.

If Daniel's poetry in tone and finish is prevailingly Jacobean, an echo of the decadent days of the great song era, Drayton's enormous mass of verse is almost purely Elizabethan. Though his life was divided into two distinct poetic periods by the accession of James, and though he lived well into the reign of Charles I., his work never lost the force and fire of the first lyric outburst. In the first days of his rejection by James he was inclined to be satirical, but the prevailing tone of his work to the very last is wholly Elizabethan, full of the hope, the patriotism, the spontaneous enthusiasm of the early days.

Drayton was undoubtedly the most versatile and voluminous of all the English poets. As we enter the vast wilderness of his published work and note the amazing variety of his subjects and forms, we are at first confused. How shall we classify this enormous producer who entered almost every realm of poetic art? Religious poems, biblical paraphrases, sonnets and lyrics in every key, pastorals and eclogues modeled after Spenser, heroic epistles after Ovid, rhyming chronicles, epics, satires, fantasies and extravaganzas, martial songs and ballads

—what has he not attempted? And it was no middle flight that he would make. He completed no less than five epics with themes ranging from the miracles of Moses to legends of Robert of Normandy and chronicles of the days of Edward II. Nor are any of these poems noted for their brevity. Lowell declares that *Polyolbion* is the "plesiosaurus of verse." The published works of the poet contain, according to Craik, nearly one hundred thousand lines, or a bulk ten times as great as *Paradise Lost*.

Of the life of Drayton we know but little. Like Shakespeare, he was a native of Warwickshire; he is supposed to have been a student at Oxford; and some time previous to 1591 he went to London, where in six years he published no less than eight volumes of poetry. He secured the patronage of several noble families and was honored by Elizabeth, but being rejected by James he retired into seclusion. He was soon befriended, however, by the Earl of Dorset, who took him into his own home and enabled him to devote his last years uninterruptedly to poetry.

The first period of Drayton's literary career resembles in many respects that of his contemporary and friend, Daniel. He contributed his book of sonnets, he wrote his pastorals and songs, and he had his time of patriotic exaltation, the most notable fruit of which was *The Barons' Wars*. This teeming and exultant period seems to have been followed by one of inactivity, but the interval of unproductiveness was a short one; his last period, which opened with the accession of James, was one of almost constant publication. During these years the poet, without literary incentive save his own caprice,

allowed his Muse to wander at will. Hence the variety, the fanciful nature, the strength, of his later creations. They are the dreams and the poetic recreations of a poet who, no longer anxious about material things, and sure of his inspiration, wandered at his own sweet will.

Drayton's sonnets, though by no means inferior, would not be mentioned were it not that among them is one of the few great sonnets of all literature, the "Since there's no hope," a gem so pure that many have questioned its authorship. His historical poems far surpass those of Daniel. They have more vigor and movement than those of the gentle poet. Drayton delighted in action; he was rough and daring, and he filled his lines with the old English fire. Of his later work his ballad *Agincourt*, universally rated as the best martial lyric in the language, stands conspicuous. No one who has in his veins a drop of English blood can read its ringing stanzas without a thrill of the old Saxon war spirit:

> When down their bows they threw,
> And forth their bilbows drew,
> And on the French they flew:
> No man was tardy,
> Arms from the shoulders sent,
> Scalps to the teeth were rent,
> Down the French peasants went,
> These men were hardy.

The lines are like a trumpet. And the wonder is that the penner of this poem that, as Lowell says, runs and leaps, "clashing its verses like swords upon bucklers," could also write *Nymphidia*, a dainty song of Queen Mab and fairy land, as fanciful as the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and as exquisite in its settings as Drake's *Culprit Fay*.

Upon a grasshopper they got,
And what with amble and with trot,
For hedge nor ditch they spared not,
  But after her they hied them ;
A cobweb over them they throw,
To shield the wind if it should blow ;
Themselves they wisely could bestow
  Least any should espy them.

But to compare these agile and perfect lyrics with the ponderous, unwieldy *Polyolbion* is indeed to reach a climax. The task that the poet set for himself was simply to write in alexandrines " A chorographical description of all the tracts, rivers, mountains, forests, and other parts of this renowned Isle of Great Britain; with intermixture of the most remarkable stories, antiquities, wonders . . . of the same." It is the poetic Domsday Book of England. And yet the subject was not an unpoetic one. To celebrate the beauties and tell the legends of English hills and streams was an eminently poetic task. It is only the attempt to celebrate *all* the natural beauties of the island that lays the poem open to criticism. But despite this the poet was equal to his task. One has but to read a dozen pages of this inspired guidebook to realize that it is full of beautiful descriptions and charmingly told episodes. When the poet reaches his native soil, when

Upon the mid-lands now the industrious muse doth fall,
That shire which we the heart of England well may call,

he is at his best. The picture is traced with loving care. Charles Lamb was delighted with the poem. " He has gone over the soil," he declared, " with the fidelity of a herald and the painful love of a son; he has not left a

rivulet, so narrow that it may be stepped over, without honorable mention, and has animated streams with life and passion above the dreams of old mythology." But the vast extent of the poem repels readers. It doubtless will never be read save in selections.

There are other sides of Drayton upon which we cannot dwell. His achievements were so many that at best one can hope to treat only the most typical. He was not a poet of the highest rank; he was in no sense an inspired singer; and yet of the small group of Elizabethans who devoted their powers wholly to poetry, Drayton, after Spenser, is undoubtedly the most conspicuous figure.

REQUIRED READING. "Since there's no help," *Agincourt*, and *Nymphidia*. The selections in Ward, *English Poets*, and Schelling, *Elizabethan Lyrics*, should be read.

3. John Donne (1573–1631)

Authorities. The life of Donne by **Izaak Walton** (Bohn), a charming book, is the chief source of information about the poet; **Dr. Johnson's** sketch in *Lives of the Poets* (Bohn) should be read with caution. The best recent life of Donne is **Jessop's** in English Religious Leaders Series; the most helpful edition of his poems is that by **Chambers** and **Saintsbury** in The Muse's Library; the edition of Donne in the Riverside *British Poets* is also valuable. **Gosse,** *Life and Letters of Dr. John Donne,* is a brilliant study of the poet.

The place of John Donne in the history of Elizabethan poetry has never been fully settled. No other poet of the age has been so variously estimated. Dryden and Dr. Johnson considered him the founder of the "metaphysical school of poets," the chief characteristics of

whose work were "unnatural and far-fetched conceits," "enormous and disgusting hyperboles," "violent and unnatural fictions," "slight and trifling sentiments." Of late years there have been critics, notably Dowden and Minto, who would dismiss the whole metaphysical school as a myth, and who see in the poems of Donne only the vagaries common to the court poetry of the age. What Tudor courtier, they ask, was not full of conceits and crotchets, of artificial sentiments and strivings after effect? The poetry of Donne could not mark the old age of the poetic era, since nearly all of it was written when the first chorus of Elizabethan singers was in full voice. To sustain the theory, he should have written at the end of the period, in the sad afternoon that followed the glad morning of Spenser and Marlowe and Shakespeare.

The theory that the great poetic period went through certain well-defined phases, commencing with joyous and spontaneous song and ending with moralizings and metaphysics, cannot for a moment be maintained. But while we may dismiss this idea of progressive development during the short poetic period, we cannot read through the poems of Donne without feeling that in them is something radically different from anything in the works of his contemporaries or predecessors. We are impressed first of all by the melancholy, half-morbid note that dominates nearly all his poems and persists as an undertone through them all. Even when he is most gay and spontaneous we detect two tones,—

> The lyric lark and the grave whispering dove.

It is like the slow strokes of a knell echoing through the

joyous air of a June morning; like a branch of yellow leaves amid the springtime blossoms, a hint of the coming autumn days. The sight of a lovely maiden sets the poet to thinking of the grave; a summer rose, instead of filling him with rapturous delight, sets him to moralizing:

> Little think'st thou, poor flower,
> Whom I have watchéd six or seven days,
> And seen thy birth, and seen that every hour
> Gave to thy growth, thee to this height to raise,
> And now dost laugh and triumph on this bough—
> Little think'st thou
> That it will freeze anon and that I shall
> To-morrow find thee fallen, or not at all.

In everything he was serious and sad,—sad even to melancholy and morbidness. He wrote a work in praise of suicide; he composed a book of funeral elegies; in his last hours he wrapped himself in his shroud to have his portrait painted with closed eyes and ghastly face.

It is easy to misrepresent Donne by dwelling on one phase of his many-sided character, but at whatever angle we view his poetry we find the melancholy and moralizing tendency predominant. The lyrists, like Greene, and Marlowe, and Lyly, were an unpractical set, who went into ecstasies over beauty and stopped not to think beyond the present moment, but Donne was meditative and speculative. Even Dowden admits that his songs deal with "the metaphysics and casuistry of love." Think of Greene and Marlowe opening a love-song with

> Stand still and I will read to thee
> A lecture, Love, in love's philosophy.

When poets begin to moralize and seek the scientific basis of their passion they cease to be poets; they have

become mere psychologists. " Every art," says Taine, " ends in a science." Donne, and to a less degree Daniel, was the first symptom of the decline of the great poetic period. Often at midsummer, and even in June, one may hear a single mournful cricket, the first note in the chorus of the coming autumn.

The life of Donne is divided sharply into two periods. When at the age of forty he entered the Church, to become six years later Dean of St. Paul's, he left behind him a wild and checkered youth, to enter upon a career conspicuous in English church history for its rapt spiritual exaltation and its wide-spread influence. Of Dr. Donne, the great preacher, we shall not speak; it is " Jack " Donne whose life concerns us, since nearly all of his poems were written before he entered the ministry. When he entered upon his new life he is said to have wished that all his poems might be destroyed.

Donne's early life is admirably summed by Professor Dowden:

> Papist and Protestant; doubter and believer; a seeker for faith and one who amused himself with skeptical paradoxes; a solitary thinker on obscurest problems and " a great visitor of ladies," as Sir Richard Baker describes him, " a great frequenter of plays"; a passionate student longing for action; a reader of the law; a toiler among folios of theology; a poet and a soldier; one who communed with lust and with death; a courtier and a satirist of the court; a wanderer over Europe and one who lay inactive in a sullen weedy lake without space for stroke of arms or legs—such was Donne up to his fortieth year.

His poetic product was small, ludicrously so when compared with the work of a poet like Drayton. He did not write for publication. His verses were " intended for the delight and amusement of a small circle." It was

not until after his death that his poems were collected and published.

The great influence of Donne upon later English poetry cannot be overlooked. His example, beyond a doubt, helped to turn the current of English poetry into the fantastic channels which it occupied during the middle of the century. Cowley and Waller, Suckling and Cleveland, and indeed the whole group of artificial rhymers who wrote from the intellect rather than from the heart, and who represent the autumn of the great creative era, were but copying the vagaries and blemishes of this early poet, neglecting utterly the inspired portions of his work, the frequent lines that glow with the true Elizabethan fire.

REQUIRED READINGS. For a marked example of his metaphysical side, which traces "resemblances that are fantastic or uncalled-for or unseemly," read "The Flea" or "A Valediction of my Name." Among his best songs are "Sweetest Love, I do not go," "Love's Deity," "The Message," "Go Catch a Falling Star," "The Dream." See *Golden Treasury*, Schelling, *Elizabethan Lyrics*, and Ward, *English Poets*.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRANSITION TO FINISHED PROSE

The Rise of the Novel

Authorities. **Jusserand,** *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare;* **Dunlop,** *History of Prose Fiction;* **Raleigh,** *The English Novel;* **Tuckerman,** *History of English Prose Fiction;* **Lanier,** *The English Novel;* **Simonds,** *Introduction to English Prose Fiction;* **Warren,** *History of the Novel Previous to the Seventeenth Century.*

To understand fully the Elizabethan age one must realize that it was the breaking upon England of the Italian Renaissance a full century after it had reached its highest point in Southern Europe. The genuine enthusiasm, the marvelous genius, the honest religious devotion of the early days, had long passed from Italy. There were no more Dantes and Michel Angelos and Savonarolas. Italy had become corrupt in morals and decadent in art and literature, and it was this degenerate Italy that now took possession of England. The school of the new learning, which had endeavored to model itself on the purest and best of the Italian culture, had become but a tradition. The young men of the English nobility were flocking to the new Italy, to return, as Ascham declared, "worse transformed than were any of Circes court." The gayety and lightness, the pomp and extravagance, the fantastic style of architecture and costume, the artificial life, the inflated conversation,—indeed all the strivings of the age to achieve "nothing but what was

brilliant, unexpected, extraordinary,"—all this came out of Italy.

Of the tide of translations from the Italian that poured into England during the first twenty years of Elizabeth's reign the greater part consisted of novels and amorous tales, which old Ascham, who stands as a solitary figure between the old and the new, declared to be full of abominations. "Ten *Morte d'Arthurs* do not the tenth part so much harme as one of these bookes made in Italie and translated in England." Works like Boccaccio's *Amorous Fiametta*, "wherein is sette downe a catalogue of all and singular passions of love," like Castiglione's *Courtier*, which contains "lengthy precepts concerning assignations and lovemaking," like Painter's *Pallace of Pleasure*, Fenton's *Tragicall Discourses*, and Whetstone's *Heptameron of Civill Discourses*, became before the end of Elizabeth's reign the chief literary diet of the reading class. They were highly fashionable; no lady's table was complete without the latest issues. The moralists and the Puritans might thunder against them, it made little difference. "They were found," says Jusserand, "not only 'in every shop' but in every house; translations of them were the daily reading of Shakespeare, and they had an immense influence not only in emancipating the genius of the dramatists of the period, but, what was of equal importance, in preparing an audience for them."

That a school of native novelists should follow fast upon the heels of the Italian translators was inevitable. No sooner was it realized that the new literary form had taken a fast hold upon fashionable reading circles than English writers began in earnest to supply the demand

with a native product. The earliest of all was John Lyly, whose *Euphues*, published in the same year as Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, marks an epoch not only in the history of the English novel but of English prose. The age was preëminently poetic. Prose had made little progress; it was not yet recognized as a form capable of artistic treatment. The writings of the great reformers, like Tyndale and Latimer, had been marked by perfect simplicity and naturalness. They were the words of men inspired by a message; they were as unstudied as the talk of the street; they had not a trace of art; they were poured out spontaneously like the first outburst of lyric song. But the new school of novelists, when suddenly called upon to express themselves in prose, produced a form that is not prose at all when compared with the work of Latimer. Lyly and Sidney and Greene were poets, and their prose was but a single step away from poetry; Sidney even believed that his *Arcadia* was a poem. The balancing and alliteration and antithesis, the brilliancy and the ornamentation of the work of these novelists, combine to make up a literary form which in externals at least is as near poetry as prose can ever get. Euphuism and Arcadianism mark the point of the first transition from poetry to classic prose.

Lyly was followed by Sidney, Greene, Lodge, Nash, and others, who form a distinct literary group. Their novels quickly surpassed in popularity the translations from the Italian writers. They wrote largely for the fashionable and the wealthy, for cultured ladies, who then, as now, were the arbiters of literary success, and their novels, though to-day they seem like mere paste and tinsel, were the most successful products of their age.

1. John Lyly (*1553–1606*)

"The witty, comical, facetiously quick, and unparalleled John Lyly."

Authorities. The best text of *Euphues* is **Arber's** reprint; the most serviceable and accessible study of Lyly's life is that prefixed to **Baker's** edition of *Endymion*, in which there is a full bibliography; the best discussions of euphuism are in **Jusserand,** *English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare*, **Morley,** Vol. viii., and *Euphuism*, by **J. M. Hart.**

Few lives, even of Elizabethan writers, are more completely veiled in obscurity than that of John Lyly. Before his entrance at Magdalene College, Oxford, in 1569, very little is known of him, and after that date even until the publication of *Euphues*, which brought him into sudden prominence, the known facts of his life reduce to a single mention in Wood's *History of Oxford* (1674). He was

always adverse [says Wood] to the crabbed studies of logic and philosophy. For so it was that his genie being naturally bent to the pleasant paths of poetry, did in a manner neglect academical studies, yet not so much but that he took the degrees in arts, that of master being compleated 1575. At which time, as he was esteemed at the university a noted wit, so afterwards was at the court of Queen Elizabeth, where he was also reputed a rare poet, witty, comical, and facetious.

Even after his great success we find the records of his life singularly fragmentary. His literary industry was unceasing: novels, poems, dramas, pamphlets, flowed from his pen; he was a leader in literary circles, he was the popular writer of his day, but the great ambition of his life remained ungratified. He longed for preferment at court. For thirteen years he lived in constant expectation of gaining the mastership of the revels, but his

hopes were doomed to disappointment. He became a mere hanger-on at court, a perfect example of Spenser's picture of the expectant courtier, a pathetic figure growing more and more hopeless until at length he passes out of sight altogether. The last ten years of his life are almost completely unknown.

Lyly's first book, *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*, 1579, was followed the next year by *Euphues and his England*, which was in reality only the completion of the earlier volume. The plot is a mere shadow, well-nigh lost amid a chaos of disquisitions chiefly sentimental. Euphues, an Athenian, journeys to Naples and finally to England, but his progress is marked not by happenings but by discourses and moralizings. It was a book with a purpose as much as was *The Faerie Queene*. It would set forth "the delights that wit followeth in his youth by the pleasantness of Love and the happiness he reapeth in age by the perfectness of Wisdom." It was written confessedly for ladies. "Euphues," declared Lyly in his Preface "To the Ladies and Gentlewoemen of England," "had rather laye shut in a Ladyes casket then open in a schollers studie." He was modest in his demands: "It resteth Ladies, that you take the paines to read it, but at such times, as you spend in playing with your little Dogges, and yet will I not pinch you of that pastime, for I am content that your Dogges lye in your laps: so Euphues may be in your hands, that when you shall be wearie of the one, you may be ready to sport with the other." The book is dreary enough reading to-day. The constant moralizing, the endless analogies, the plethora of fantastic similes, the "wire-drawn distinctions," the monstrous natural history which speaks

volumes concerning the scientific attainments of the Elizabethans, the never-ending citation of parallel cases from classic lore, and the inflated and artificial style place it in another world from the novels of to-day; but to the audience for whom it was written it was the acme of brilliancy and wit. While its vogue lasted it was the most successful of books; it went through no less than six editions in two years.

The style of *Euphues*, which has been much discussed and much misunderstood, need not detain us. It was not invented by Lyly; it was only one variation of the artificial manner in use by the Italians and their imitators. Lyly undoubtedly borrowed it from Guevara, a Spanish romancer who had been translated by Lord Berners. Its leading characteristic is its extreme use of antithesis and balanced structure embellished by alliteration. Euphues, for instance, was a "young gallant of more witte than wealth and yet of more wealth than wisdom." The vogue of the style was a short one; it was out of fashion before 1590, and, aside from a few of the novelists like Greene and Lodge, none of the writers of the age were affected by it. The whole episode of Euphuism might be dismissed as a mere passing fad were it not that it indicated a new trend in the direction of English prose. Professor Baker has admirably summed up its influence.

No student of the growth of English prose from Ascham to Bunyan can doubt that even as a youth gains suppleness, grace, quickness, and sureness of movement from the severe exercises of the gymnasium, in like manner English prose gained something from the temporary success of Euphuism between 1580 and 1590. The careful study of words, of their values in sound and in meaning, meant a better understanding of the scope of the English language, of its possibilities. English prose must have come forth from the period of Ephuism more supple, with a better knowledge of its

own strength and of the methods by which any weakness in it as a means of literary expression might be overcome. The contribution of Euphuism to the development of English prose must have been, though less in extent, similar to the gain of English poetry from the study of the sonnet from Wyatt to Shakespeare.

REQUIRED READING. *Euphues*, selections at random.

2. *Robert Greene (1560–1592)*

Authorities. Life and complete works of Greene by **Grosart** (London, 1881), 15 vols.; **Jusserand,** *The English Novel,* Ch. iv.; **Arber's** edition of *Menaphon* with **Nash's** Preface; **Bell,** *Poems of Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, and Ben Jonson* (Bohn).

Despite the phenomenal success of *Euphues*, Lyly never attempted another novel. He was not working for mere gain nor for mere popularity; his ambitions were centered upon the one thought of gaining favor at court. He would please the Queen with dramas sugared with fulsome flattery; dramas in which her glorified self should appear in thin disguise. In the meantime, however, others were reaping the fruit of his discovery. Robert Greene, a leader of the roistering crew that "invaded London from the universities during the close of Elizabeth's reign," was the first to realize the great possibilities in the field that Lyly was neglecting. To this erratic genius, whose life reads like a chapter from *La Vie de Bohême*, literature was valuable chiefly because it put "a spel in his purse to conjure up a good cuppe of wine with at all times." "He made no account of winning credit by his workes," says Nash. He worked rapidly and spasmodically. "In a night and a day would he have yarkt up a pamphlet" that would have cost another man seven years. The spell of *Euphues* could open all

doors and lavish emoluments upon any who could wield it, and Greene soon caught the trick so cleverly that he even surpassed Lyly himself. Beginning with *Mamilla* in 1583, he published during the next seven years no less than fifteen "love-pamphlets," as he called his novels, all of them containing the great Euphuist's tricks of style: his languid elegance, his excessive prettiness, and his abnormal botany and zoölogy. *Euphues* was forgotten in the popularity of this new and voluminous romancer. The publishers, declared Nash, considered themselves "blest to pay Greene dear for the very dregs of his wit."

Following Greene a veritable school of young novelists entered the lists,—Lodge, Riche, Warner, Dickenson, and others,—to contend for the spoils of *Euphues*. Never before was such a plethora of elegance and sentiment showered upon the reading public. "In the countrey of Bohemia there rayned a king called Pandosto," begins the novel, and immediately we lose sight of time and place and wander in a society that never was and never can be, amid a landscape that defies human geography, and meet adventures such "as youthful poets dream" on midsummer nights. Everything is carried to extremes. Doralicia was "so adorned with more than earthlie perfection as she seemed to be framed by nature to blemishe nature, and that beautie had skipt beyond her skil in framing a piece of such curious workmanship." There is no middle ground.

The lovers [says Gosse] are devoted beyond belief, the knights are braver, the shepherds wiser, the nymphs more lovely and more flinty-hearted than tongue can tell; the courteous amorous couples file down the long arcades of the enchanted forest, and find the madrigal that Rosander or the hapless Arsinous has fastened to the balsam tree, or else they gather round the

alabaster tomb of one who died for love, and read the sonnet that his own hand has engraved there.

With the publication of Sidney's *Arcadia* in 1590 Euphuism lost its vogue and a new phase of Italianate prose sprang into popularity.

SUGGESTED READING. Selections from *Menaphon*, Arber's ed.

3. Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586)

In 1580, while under a cloud at court, Sidney had passed several months at the country residence of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and to while away the time he had amused himself and his gracious hostess with the construction of the *Arcadia*, a prose romance. There is every evidence that Sidney regarded this work simply as a recreation. "For sterner eyes it is not," he wrote to his sister, "being but a trifle and that triflingly handled." It was never revised; it was never even finished; it was a mere rough draft of a romance, written to divert an idle hour and to be burned as soon as read. But fortunately it was not burned. Four years after Sidney's death it was brought forth and published under the title of the *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, and its appearance created a sensation in the literary world well-nigh as great as that occasioned by the publication of *Euphues* ten years before. Its vogue was immediate. Greene wrote no more "love pamphlets"; Euphuism went out of style never again to appear in English literature, and Arcadianism at once became the fashionable form of prose.

Under Sidney's definition the *Arcadia* is a pastoral poem. "Poesy," he says in his *Defense*, "is a speaking

picture, with this end,—to teach and delight"; and again, "it is not riming and versing that maketh a poet. . . . But it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by." Measured by this standard, the *Arcadia* belongs with *The Faerie Queene*. Its moral is hazy at times, but it is never lost. The purpose of the romance, according to Fulke Greville, Sidney's early friend, "was to limn out such exact pictures of every posture of the mind that any man might see how to set a good countenance upon all the discountenances of adversity." Otherwise it is a love-story, laid in Arcadia, the paradise of shepherds, and full of diverting episodes and romantic adventures.

The style of the romance deserves careful attention. Sidney denounced all of Lyly's tricks of style as barbarous and pedantic. Very seldom does he use the alliterated balance, and never does he encroach upon the realm of natural history. But his style is nevertheless highly embellished, and it could hardly have been otherwise. The *Arcadia* is the dream of a young Elizabethan courtier in temporary exile, full of the ideals of chivalry, of great exploits, of gorgeous drapery and furnishings, of tournaments and pageants and romantic adventures, and it is the work of one who believed that he was writing a poem. What wonder if it is ruffled like a courtier, if it is daintily perfumed and exquisitely jewelled! But there is no such straining after effect, no such embellishment dragged in by main force as in Lyly and Greene. It is prose that flows like a poem, with liquid cadences and beautiful periods. It is a style which, though it is over-ornamented

at times, was, nevertheless, a long step in advance of Euphuism towards the perfect product of later days.

As a novel, too, the *Arcadia* was a distinct advance upon anything that had been previously written. Even now it may be read with interest for the story alone, a statement that is certainly not true of *Euphues* and its followers. Its influence even down to Dryden's day was enormous. The great fame of its author and the real charm of the story combined to give it an influence which few other novels have ever been able to exert.

REQUIRED READING. The *Arcadia*, Book i. The most accessible edition is that published by Sampson, Low & Marston and imported by the Scribners.

4. Thomas Nash (1567–1600)

Authorities. The only complete collection of Nash's works is **Grosart's** edition (London, 1883–84), 6 vols.; see also **Jusserand,** Ch. vi., and **Morley,** Vol. ix.

The last step in the development of the Elizabethan novel was taken by Thomas Nash, another of that strangely gifted and boisterous group of young men who so completely took possession of the closing decade of the century. With Nash the realistic novel, the novel founded on actual life, first appears in English literature. Greene was in reality the pioneer; his "Cony-catching pamphlets," issued during the last two years of his life, had described with minuteness the criminal class of London, but it was not until Nash had issued in 1594 his *Unfortunate Traveller, or the Adventures of Jack Wilton*, that a novel was attempted based wholly upon real life. The tale is "a picaresque romance—that is to say, a romance describing realistically the shifts and adventures,

perils and escapes, of a light-hearted, witty, spring-heeled knave, who goes through all worldly vicissitudes, thus lending himself to his creator's purpose to describe or satirize all classes of society." The book is full of adventures, of realistic pictures and character-sketches, strung upon a slight thread of plot. After a vivid description of life in England during the days of Henry VIII., the author conducts his hero through France and Germany to Italy, in which "drain and sink of hell" he finds ample opportunities for observation and adventure.

For vividness of description and for skill at characterization Nash may be compared even with Defoe. He was a fastidious chooser of words. Mere generalizations did not satisfy him: he must have the one strong specific word that would best reproduce the character or scene, and it is this constant struggle for originality and force that is his chief excellence as a writer. His metaphors are "terse and telling," and altogether his style, though here and there it shows traces of Lyly and the artificial school, is graphic and picturesque.

Nash had no immediate followers. He stood for more than a century a solitary figure; a pioneer who had strayed into a rich field where no one wished to follow, a field which he soon abandoned himself. But his influence told at last. "As Sir Philip Sidney was the precursor of Richardson," says Raleigh, "so Nash is the direct forerunner of Defoe. . . . *The Unfortunate Traveller* stands alone among the productions of a many-sided, vigorous, and brilliant age, and among the novels of that age must certainly be counted the most vigorous and brilliant."

The Elizabethan Novel. Thus was evolved the Eliza-

bethan novel. It was the child of Italy; it was from first to last clothed in peculiar and fantastic literary forms; yet it marks a definite stage in the evolution of English prose, and it is the foundation of the modern English novel. It is impossible to understand the age without a study of it. Grotesque as it often was in style and sentiment, it nevertheless refined both the language and the manners of the people. From first to last it was used as a vehicle for moral instruction: Lyly's first aim was to give wise and philosophic advice; Sidney, like Spenser, would seek "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline," and even Nash, the jolly roisterer of the London inns, would show in vivid colors the evil side of life that the innocent might avoid it. The influence of the novel upon the language was certainly great. It was the school in which English prose received its earliest laws and its first shaping touch. For the first time it was realized that prose was as susceptible of artistic finish as poetry. It was but a step from the elaborate and highly ornate prose of Sidney to the polished and stately periods of Hooker and the perfect creations of the great prose masters.

The strong and homely old native prose all through the period kept on parallel with the new-fangled product. There seemed in the minds of writers to be a distinct line drawn between prose written to please and that written to instruct. From the same pen would come work that was stiff and florid, and work that was rude and simple, and to compare the two was like setting the ruffled and perfumed courtier beside the rude and simple peasant. It was an era of pamphlets. The Marprelate controversy was waged fiercely during a part of the time that the

novel was evolving, and many of the writers, even Lyly and Nash, were connected with it. But the war of pamphlets added little to English literature. In those fierce tracts, hot with controversy, prose reverted largely to its native type—homely, unfinished, often obscure, yet at times exceedingly forcible and picturesque.

A few spirited records of travel there were (Hakluyt's *Voyages*, for instance, and Raleigh's *Last Fight of the Revenge*), a few notable translations, and several famous chronicles, but they throw no new light upon the development of the age, and they add little that is new toward an appreciation of the tendencies of English prose.

References. For a full consideration of the Marprelate controversy the student should consult Arber, *The Martin Marprelate Controversy;* the prose of the pamphlets is carefully considered in Saintsbury, *Elizabethan Literature.* Raleigh's *The Last Fight of the Revenge* is among Arber's Reprints. Holinshed's *Chronicles* and North's *Plutarch* are so closely connected with Shakespeare's work that they can be easily studied, large parts of them being reproduced in Morley's edition of Shakespeare and Furness' *Variorum.* They may also be found in Hazlet, *Shakespeare's Library.*

CHAPTER XX

THE TRANSITION TO SHAKESPEARE

Authorities. The same as on page 200 above; **Gosson,** *School of Abuse,* Ed. Arber; *The Works of George Peele,* Ed. Bullen, 2 vols.; also Ed. Dyce; **Marlowe,** *Doctor Faustus;* **Greene,** *History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,* Ed. Ward (Clarendon Press); *Dramatic Works of Robert Greene,* Ed. Dyce; **Manly,** *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama,* Vol. ii. (Athenæum Press).

In 1579, at the opening of the creative era, English literature was flowing in two distinct channels. The Italian influence in its various phases had resulted in an artificial product that seems at first sight to dominate the whole period. The poems of Spenser, who was both "the morning and the evening" of the movement, the creations of Sidney and the lyrists, and the works of Lyly and the novelists are the most conspicuous productions of the pre-Shakespearian period, yet all of these authors wrote for an extremely limited audience. They touched only the fashionable and the cultured; the people knew nothing of their artistic creations. All out of sight there still flowed on the old popular literature,—the ballads and rude songs, the vigorous, homely prose of preacher and chronicler, and, above all, the crude but strong old native drama.

From the very first the stage had found a congenial home in England. The common people had greeted with enthusiasm every phase of the drama from its first religious beginnings down to its final secular form. All

through the Tudor century it had constantly grown in popularity until at length it became the chief diversion of all classes. The dramatic representation took the place of the old minstrelsy. The solitary singer, wandering from court to court or from hamlet to hamlet, was now represented by the strolling band of actors. Instead of the single reciter who, with voice and instrument, reproduced the stirring scene, there was now the group of reciters working in concert. Nor did their themes differ greatly from those of the old minstrels. There must be a moving story which the hearer must feel. If it be a tragedy, there must be a surfeit of slaughter; blood must flow as freely as in *Beowulf*. In some of the early tragedies the entire *dramatis personæ* perish. "Give me the man who will all others kill and last of all himself!" cries one of Fletcher's characters. When there is comedy it must be broad and coarse: quarrels of fishwives; oaths and billingsgate; hard blows and torn hair. There is no attempt at dramatic art: the unities are undreamed of; kings and peasants jostle each other; comedy and tragedy are hopelessly mixed. There is no unity of plot, no unity of characterization. The play is a mere series of detached scenes in which the action is violent, and the spectator goes away surfeited with sensation. Such was the popular drama in 1579, ten years before the first work of Shakespeare.

The attempt to naturalize the classic drama founded upon Latin models and upon Aristotle we have already noted. The cultured class welcomed the innovation. Sidney as late as 1583 condemned the popular dramas as "gross absurdities"; "all their plays be neither tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings with rigth

clowns"; "faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions." Scholars did their best to introduce the new form and to discourage the production of inartistic work. Between 1568 and 1580 fifty-two dramas were performed at court and, judging by their titles, which are all that remain of them, they were prevailingly of the classic type. But despite the efforts of the classicists the native romantic drama increased constantly in popularity.

The Rise of the Theaters. In 1576 the Corporation of London, believing that the popular stage was an enemy to morality, and also that the coming and going of wandering bands of players increased the danger of contagion in time of plague, ordered that no theatrical performances should be given within the city limits. The action marks an era in the history of the English drama; it turned the eyes of all London toward the popular stage, and it precipitated a movement that was of the highest importance. A spirited contest arose in which all the city was involved. Lodge wrote a *Defense of Stage Plays;* Gosson put forth his *School of Abuse,* "conteining a pleasaunt invective against Poets, Pipers, Plaiers, Jesters, and such like Caterpillers of a commonwealth"; and Sidney replied in his noble *Defense of Poesy,* in the course of which he defended the drama in its classic form. The players, profiting by the publicity thus thrust upon them, boldly continued their performances, avoiding the law by setting up regular playhouses just outside the city bounds. Thus began the permanent theater; thus ended the period of strolling players, of performances in the courtyards of inns, of private companies in the employ of noblemen. In 1576 and in the years immediately following no less than

five prominent playhouses were erected just outside the city bounds, and their success was phenomenal. The drama soon became the leading diversion of London.

It is obvious that the popular and the classic dramas could not forever move side by side. A clash was inevitable. Which would yield, the cultured minority or the people? In Germany and France the cultured classes won, their drama became purely classic; but in England the people held stubbornly to the form that through centuries of evolution had become peculiarly their own. It was the courtly drama that yielded at last; it was the lawless romantic form that finally became the national type.

Shakespeare's Predecessors. But the old native drama could not survive unchanged. It must gain organic unity; it must cast off its crudities, and, without losing any of its abundant vitality and individuality, it must acquire artistic finish and refinement. In 1579 this seemed like an impossibility, like a work that would require long and gradual evolution. But it came all in a moment. During the next decade there arose a school of dramatists who harmonized the discordant elements. Starting from the popular standpoint and adding nothing which at any time could offend their audiences, upon whose good will they depended for support, they gradually refined out the worst elements, adding all that was best in the classic forms, until at length everything was ready for a supreme master who should make a model for the English drama of all time.

Perhaps the most picturesque event in the history of English literature is the descent upon London of this boisterous crew of young men from the universities of

Cambridge and Oxford. For over a decade, beginning soon after 1580, they were the most conspicuous element in the literary life of the city. Greene, Peele, Lyly, Kyd, Nash, Lodge, Whetstone, Marlowe—it was a wild and wayward group of youths, who exhausted every form of vice and fast living, and who, the most of them, drove themselves into early graves. Marlowe was dead at the age of twenty-nine, Greene at thirty-two, Nash at thirty-three, and Peele at forty. They were peculiarly the products of Elizabeth's reign: they were born after her accession to the throne; they died, almost all of them, before the end of her career; they received their training during her most glorious period; they were full of the new and exultant spirit of the age,—so full that they were unbalanced and overcome. Their genius and versatility and activity were marvelous. They attempted everything, they entered every realm of literary art, but it was the drama that most attracted them. They had no intention of becoming reformers. They wished simply to cater to the popular taste that they might keep their purses full; but they had received the best education to be had in their day; they were refined and cultured in their tastes and unconsciously their training told upon their work. They pruned the rudeness from the native drama, they refined it to an appreciable degree, but, aside from Marlowe, they did not change its form or its drift. "Their chief importance," says Symonds, "consists in their having contributed to the formation of Marlowe's dramatic style. It was he who irrevocably decided the destinies of the romantic drama; and the whole subsequent evolution of that species, including Shakespeare's work, can be regarded as the expansion,

rectification, and artistic ennoblement of the type fixed by Marlowe's epoch-making tragedies." In the light of this fact we need not examine in detail the work of Greene and Peele. Before 1587, when Marlowe put forth his earliest drama, they had done little save to prune away the roughest of the excrescences on the old native branch, and after this date they were content to follow their master. The whole English drama before *Tamburlaine* and the part that Marlowe played in reshaping it is best described in the prologue to his first play:

From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits,
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
We 'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
Threatening the world with high astounding terms,
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.

It was Marlowe's task to cast off the "jigging," rhyming measures of rude playwrights and the trivial themes with which they pleased their simple audiences, and to substitute for them a stately, unrhymed measure full of "high astounding terms," and a plot that should deal with the deeds of kings,—even of kings who threatened the whole world. To show what he meant by "jigging veins," let us quote almost at random from the dramas that held the stage when he began his work. Let us choose from Preston's *Cambises*, a play licensed in 1569:

With speed I am sent all things to prepare,
My message to doe as the king did declare.
His Grace doth meane a banquet to make,
Meaning in this place repast for to take.
Wel, the cloth shal be laid, and all things in redines,
To court to return, when doon is my busines;

or from *Appius and Virginia*, first printed in 1575:

> Well, then, this is my counsel, thus standeth the case,
> Perhaps such a fetch as may please your Grace:
> There is no more ways, but hap or hap not,
> Either hap, or else hapless, to knit up the knot.

One has only to read these short extracts in connection with the six lines quoted from the prologue to *Tamburlaine* to realize what Marlowe did for the English drama.

Of the pre-Shakespearian group we will consider only Lyly and Marlowe.

1. John Lyly (1553–1606)

Authorities. The best edition of Lyly's dramas for general use is that in the Library of Old Authors, 2 vols. *Lyly's Dramatic Works*, Ed. Fairholt (London, 1858); Lyly's *Endymion*, Ed. Baker; "The Children's Companies," *Shakesperiana*, ix., No. 3; **Morley**, vol. ix. For full bibliography of Lyly, see **Baker**, *Endymion*.

The great success of *Euphues* placed Lyly at once at the head of the literary circle of the court and gave him the opportunity of supplying the Master of the Revels with plays for the royal amusement. The form that he chose for his new work was a variation of the old masque or pageant that had long been popular at the court revels. The scene is usually classic,—the vague, romantic Athens of the *Midsummer Night's Dream;* the atmosphere is the golden one of fairy-land; the texture of the plot is of the flimsiest: a bit of Grecian mythology or tradition, a few characters from legend or history,—Endymion, Sappho, Campaspe,—and an old story, vague and fanciful, often thinly clad in allegory. The play lends itself to gorgeous settings; what contrasts in Alexander, Diogenes, Cam-

paspe, Apelles! What magnificence in Midas and in Cynthia, who is at once the moon and the matchless Elizabeth! What statuesque beauty in Galatea, and Campaspe, and Daphne!

Lyly's earliest play, *The Woman in the Moon*, was written in the verse forms of the classic school, but it is plainly evident that its author was not at ease. The penner of *Euphues* to be at his best must work in prose. The grace and brilliance of his style were obscured by the classic measures, and therefore, unconscious that he was revolutionizing one branch of the English drama, Lyly wrote all his other plays in the Euphuized prose of which he was so perfect a master.

In all his dramas there are two distinct currents which seldom cross,—the one broadly comic, the other poetic and fanciful. In *Endymion* the fun is furnished by the scapegrace pages and by the boastful and cowardly Sir Thopas; in *Campaspe* it is furnished by the servants and by the philosopher Diogenes. There is some attempt at characterization, especially in the comic parts, but the more serious characters are often wooden to a degree. Campaspe at times breaks from her statue-like beauty into sweet womanhood, and Endymion once or twice, as in the scene where he awakes like Rip Van Winkle from his forty years' sleep, seems to be really alive, but such characters as Tellus and Cynthia are mere shadows. The style is finished and often beautiful; only in the long soliloquies does the author carry his Euphuism to extremes, but even in these one constantly finds lines and passages of exquisite beauty. "Love," says Alexander, "falleth like a dew as well upon the low grasse as upon the high cedar." "When will you finish

Campaspe ?" he asks of the painter Apelles. "Never finish!" replies the artist; "for always in absolute beauty there is somewhat above art."

It was Lyly who first set the fashion of inserting lyrics into the drama. His comedies were all of them performed by the boy actors of the Royal Chapel and of St. Paul's, and the temptation to use the trained voice of the chorister was irresistible. Little songs are scattered everywhere, like Apelles' song in *Campaspe*, Sapho's song in *Sapho and Phaon*, the song of Daphne in *Midas*, and that most spontaneous of all his lyrics,—the one that must have been singing in Shakespeare's ears when he wrote "Hark, hark, the lark,"—the spring song in *Campaspe:*

> Who is 't now we hear?
> None but the lark so shrill and clear.
> How at heauens gats she claps her wings,
> The morne not waking till shee sings!
> Heark, heark, with what a pretty throat
> Poore Robin red-breast tunes his note!
> Hearh how the jolly cuckoes sing
> "Cuckoe," to welcome in the spring,—
> "Cuckoe," to welcome in the spring!

Lyly's place in the history of Elizabethan literature is certainly a large one. His part in shaping English prose and the English novel has been commented upon, and in the history of the drama he is fully as prominent. It was he who first made use of dramatic prose and turned it to the use of comedy. So weighty was his example that by the close of the century prose was generally used by all dramatists for comic scenes. Marlowe used it in the minor scenes of *Dr. Faustus;* and it became the uniform practice of Shakespeare to cast in prose all passages

of a comic nature,—all scenes where clowns and peasants take up the dialogue. It is not too much to say that Lyly gave to comedy its permanent form as Marlowe did to tragedy.

Lyly deserves mention, too, for lifting comedy to a higher level. He showed that laughable situations may be produced without horse-play or coarseness. Often in his scenes we find real wit and humor: Alexander seizes the brush of Apelles and attempts a picture. "How do I paint?" he asks at length. "Like a king," answers the artist. Often there is amusing characterization, and everywhere there is a chasteness, a refinement of humor, which the later drama would have done well to copy.

The comedies of Lyly were the direct precursors of such works as Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the masques of Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Milton. Surely Lyly deserves a most careful study by all who would seek the origin of the English drama.

REQUIRED READING. *Campaspe*, in Manly, *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama*, Vol. ii.; or *Endymion*, Baker's Ed.

2. *Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)*

Marlowe was one of the greatest poets of the world, whose work was cast by accident and caprice into an imperfect mold of drama.—*Saintsbury.*

Authorities. The best edition of Marlowe's works is **Bullen's**, 3 vols. (Elizabethan Dramatists); the most convenient edition of his plays for the general student is **Ellis**' in the Mermaid Series. See also *Marlowe's Dramatic Works*, including translations (Scribners), and **Bell,** *Poems of Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, and*

Ben Jonson; (Bohn). **McLaughlin,** *Edward the Second* (Holt); **Tancock,** *Edward the Second* (Clarendon Press); **Wagner,** *Dr. Faustus* (London Series); **Ward,** *Dr. Faustus,* with Green, *Friar Bacon,* etc. (Clarendon Press); and **Thayer,** *Best Elizabethan Plays,* which contains the *Jew of Malta,* are all valuable works. The most helpful studies of Marlowe are **Lowell's** in *The Old British Dramatists,* and **Dowden's** in *Transcripts and Studies.*

As we read the long annals of the early English drama, noting its slow evolution, dwelling upon each minute change in form or spirit which may indicate the rate of growth and the tendency of development, suddenly, unheralded and unaccounted for, there appears a youth of twenty-three who all in a moment with a single play advances the drama a whole era, making of it a new creation. His advent seems almost like an apparition. No one knows when he came to London, or whence he came, or, with few exceptions, what had been his previous career.

In the parish of Canterbury it is recorded that on February 26, 1564, "was christened Christopher Marlowe, the sonne of John Marlowe"—a date exactly two months before the christening of Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon. The father was a shoemaker, a man of some ability, for he was "Clarke of St. Maries," but of moderate means; yet in 1581 we find his son matriculated at Oxford where in 1583 he received the bachelor's degree. No more is known of the young student until he suddenly startled London with the "high astounding lines" of *Tamburlaine.* He was unknown in literary circles. The wild young crew whose revels he was so soon to join denounced him as an intruder. Nash and Greene, fearing for their own laurels in the sudden popularity of the

new favorite, broke into coarse abuse of his "swelling bombast of bragging blank verse," but they were soon his friends, using his "mighty line" as if it were their own creation.

The new thing that Marlowe brought to the English drama was artistic blank verse. Not that he invented the measure; Surrey had first introduced it to English readers in his translations from Virgil, and it had been used for dramatic work by the authors of *Gorboduc* and the classic dramas, but it was a wooden and lifeless thing before Marlowe touched it. The blank verse of *Gorboduc* halts at the end of every line; the voice struggles desperately over the syllables, to come down heavily on the last word of the verse, where it lingers for a moment before again launching out. The anatomy of the measure is unconcealed; it is as evident and well-nigh as painful as that of a corduroy road:

> Lo, here the end of these two youthful kings,
> The father's death, the ruin of their realms!
> O most unhappy state of counsellors,
> That light on so unhappy lords and times,
> That neither can their good advice be heard,
> Yet must they bear the blames of ill success.
> But I will to the king, their father, haste,
> Ere this mischief come to the likely end.

This was the best effort of English dramatic blank verse before 1587, when Marlowe began to write; this was the measure that only nine years after this date Shakespeare was to mold into the perfect cadences of *The Merchant of Venice*. To show what Marlowe did we have only to compare these halting, lifeless lines with a typical passage from *Doctor Faustus*:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

. . . .

Here will I dwell, for heaven is in those lips
And all is dross that is not Helena.

. . . .

Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless Semele.

But what most of all impressed the contemporaries of Marlowe was his "high astounding terms." In the opinion of Mr. Ward, the dramatist intentionally "strained the force of diction to the utmost" as a compensation for the rhymes and jingles of the contemporary drama. *Tamburlaine* is full of "mighty lines,"—round, resonant proper names, and reverberating phrases.

And Christian merchants that with Russian stems
Plough up huge furrows in the Caspian sea.

Is it not passing brave to be a king
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?

Of such a burden as outweighs the sands
And all the craggy rocks of Caspia.

Awake, ye men of Memphis!—hear the clang
Of Scythian trumpets!—hear the basilisks
That, roaring, shake Damascus' turrets down!
The rogue of Volga holds Zenocrate.

The partition between such lines and mere bombast is indeed a thin one. Marlowe often overstepped the limit; he is full of ranting, turgid passages which in the mouth of a strong-lunged actor would send a thrill through the simple audiences that first heard them. Some of the

soliloquies of the Scythian monarch are pure fustian. It was against this inartistic work which often blemishes Marlowe's plays that Shakespeare speaks in *Hamlet* :

> O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious, periwigpated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise.

Marlowe's three earliest dramas, *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *The Jew of Malta* have much in common. They belong in plot and spirit to the sensational, popular drama which then held the stage. *Tamburlaine* is full of the old spirit,—few plays in all literature so reek with blood; *Doctor Faustus* is a kind of Morality play,—good and evil angels struggle for the soul of Faustus, the Devil in various forms assists him to play all manner of impish tricks, and finally he carries the doomed man on his back to the flames in the old Morality fashion; the Jew of Malta becomes after the second act of the play a mere ogre whose deeds of crime are bounded only by his creator's imagination.

Nor are these the only resemblances to the primitive English drama. To Marlowe the theater was primarily a source of income; he must please the people if he was to receive his pay, and he dare not depart too radically from the old methods. His plays are therefore destitute of that fine humor that preserves the work of Shakespeare. The audience laughs often at Doctor Faustus, but it is for the same reason that they laugh at Vice in the Moralities. "There are," says Lowell, "properly speaking, no characters in the plays of Marlowe,—but personages and interlocutors. We do not get to know

them, but only to know what they do or say. The nearest approach to a character is Barabbas, in *The Jew of Malta*, and he is but the incarnation of the popular hatred of the Jew. There is really nothing human in him. He seems a bugaboo rather than a man." The action of the plays is without an organic center. The acts and scenes of *Doctor Faustus*, for instance, are detached stories; they are the several adventures and escapades of a man who has the Devil as his servant. "Nothing happens," continues Lowell, "because it must, but because the author wills it so. The conception of life is purely arbitrary and as far from nature as that of an imaginative child."

In *Edward the Second* there is more careful work. The plot moves toward a culmination and the scenes are but the accessories. The bombast of *Tamburlaine* and the earlier plays is almost wholly wanting, perhaps because the theme was narrower and did not kindle the author's imagination. His conception of the weak and vacillating king, of his mental anguish and fearful death, is full of power and truth. "The reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty in Edward," says Charles Lamb, "furnished hints which Shakespeare scarce improved in *Richard II.*"

But Marlowe, despite the restraint and the artistic superiority of *Edward the Second*, displayed, after all, his greatest power in his first tragedies. It is in them that we find his real contributions to the drama. It must constantly be borne in mind that *Tamburlaine*, and indeed all of Marlowe's plays, was the work of a mere youth,—of a sensitive and imaginative soul in its most extravagant period. *Hero and Leander* in its passion and imaginative richness can be compared only with the work

of Keats. The young dramatist dreamed of Oriental magnificence:

> A thousand galleys, manned with Christian slaves
> I freely give thee, which shall cut the straits
> And bring armados from the coasts of Spain
> Fraughted with gold of rich America.
> The Grecian virgins shall attend on thee,
> Skilful in music and in amorous lays.
> With naked negroes shall thy coach be drawn,
> And as thou rid'st in triumph through the streets
> The pavement underneath thy chariot wheels
> With Turkey carpets shall be coverèd
> And cloth of Arras hung about the walls.
> A hundred bassoes, clothed in crimson silk,
> Shall ride before thee on Barbarian steeds;
> And when thou goest, a golden canopy
> Enchased with precious stones, which shine as bright
> As that fair veil that covers all the world.
> And more than this—for all I cannot tell.

There is no limit to the gorgeous dream save the bounds of the dreamer's imagination. His fancy ran riot: he must deal only with kings who have absolute power and world dominion; with men who at the price of their souls have all pleasure and all power at command; of monsters who exhaust all the energies of crime in every form. But this very passion and extravagance of youth, which a few years would have subdued and tempered, only proves the enormous power of the man. The sonorous passages of *Tamburlaine*, the bombast, the passion, the magnificent settings, the imaginative power that could scarce be satisfied with the most gorgeous pages of human experience, were not lost upon the later drama.

> It was he and no other [says Ward] who first inspired with true poetic passion the form of literature to which his chief efforts were consecrated.

After Marlowe had written it was impossible for our dramatists to return to the cold horrors or tame declamation of the earlier tragic drama: *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Gorboduc* had alike been left behind. "His raptures were all air and fire," and it is his gift of passion which, together with his services to the outward form of the English drama, makes Marlowe worthy to be called not a predecessor but the earliest in the immortal company of our great dramatists.

The early death of Marlowe—he was stabbed in a tavern brawl before he was thirty—can never be too much regretted. He is the only man in the whole range of English history of whom we can say, "Had he lived he might perhaps have equaled Shakespeare." He was, like his own Faustus, a victim to the baser part of his nature, and the final words of the chorus in his play were his own epitaph:

> Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight
> And burned is Apollo's laurel bough,
> That sometime grew within this learned man.
> Faustus is gone; regard his hellish fall
> Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
> Only to wonder at unlawful things
> Whose deepness does intice such forward wits,
> To practice more than heavenly power permits.

REQUIRED READING. The student should read at least two of Marlowe's plays, *Doctor Faustus*, or *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward the Second.*

CHAPTER XXI

SHAKESPEARE

Authorities. The best life of Shakespeare is that by **Sidney Lee**; the most helpful introduction to Shakespeare is **Dowden's** Primer; the standard single-volume edition of Shakespeare's works is the Globe. A veritable library of commentary and criticism has grown up about the great poet, all of which is of more or less value; the following books comprise the minimum list that the general student should have at hand: a standard edition of Shakespeare's complete works,—**Hudson, White, Rolfe, Morley, Clark and Wright,** the Arden, or any other carefully edited, well printed edition; **Furness,** *Variorum;* **Coleridge,** *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare;* **Dowden,** *Shakspere; his Mind and Art;* **Moulton,** *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist;* **Wendell,** *William Shakespeare;* **Wyndham,** *Poems of Shakespeare;* **Gervinus,** *Shakespeare Commentaries;* **Ten Brink,** *Five Lectures on Shakespeare;* **Bartlett,** *Concordance to Shakespeare;* **Welsh,** *English Masterpiece Course,* for practical bibliography.

At last all was ready for the supreme master who should end the long era of preparation and of gradual development and fix the final form of the English language and the English drama. It was the earliest moment when such a master could appear. The language before the days of Wyatt had been a barbarous mixture, but the refining influence of the Courtly Writers and the civilizing force of contact with continental culture had humanized and enriched it until now it was an instrument of marvelous compass and flexibility. The English

people, too, for the first time were ready for the great national poet. The nation in its modern sense had just come into being; it had just awakened to a realization of its position; it had for the first time developed a sense of national consciousness. The spirit of the era was dramatic; the age was preëminently one of action, and he who would interpret it must do it with the drama as his medium. The stage had been prepared; it had been gradually evolved from the nation's life; the people of all classes were ready; there was lacking only the master, and just at the right moment he appeared.

That this supreme English master should have sprung from the common people, that he should have been a man untouched by the schools, one whose entire youth had been passed amid the ordinary life of a remote country village, while it presents one of the most difficult problems in the whole history of English literature, is, nevertheless, a fact of immense significance. It was a man from the people who gave the final form to the English drama, and who fixed forever the English tongue, a fact that wonderfully illustrates the strength and the resistance of the old native English stock. Shakespeare settled forever all question as to which was to rule English literature, the classic and courtly elements or the strong old Anglo-Saxon undercurrent which ever since the Conquest had been constantly appearing,—in Layamon, in Langland, in the balladists, in Latimer. The one thing that impresses us most as we study the great dramatist is his enormous personality. He is himself; he can be compared with no one; he can be traced to no one. He is not content, like the classicists, to follow older models; he borrows freely, but all that he bor-

rows he turns into the mold of his own mind and it comes forth utterly new, utterly unlike any previous effort. But this individuality is only another name for his Briticism. He is English in every fiber of his being; he is the incarnation of the English nation; and all of this Briticism was but his inheritance from the common people from whom he sprung, the common people who since the days of the Conquest had preserved unemasculated the old native English spirit.

The Life of Shakespeare, like that of all early English writers who were unconnected with the civil government, has come down to us in a very fragmentary condition. About his origin there is no question. The life of John Shakespeare, his father, as revealed by the local records, stands out with considerable completeness. We know that he was a shrewd, energetic business man, the descendant of a long line of substantial Warwickshire yeomen. In 1551 he had removed to Stratford-on-Avon, where he began his career as a dealer in agricultural produce, and so marked was his early prosperity that he was soon able not only to make considerable purchases of real estate in Stratford and to become a prominent figure in the little village, but to win for his wife a daughter of one of the best-known families of Warwickshire. The marriage of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden took place in the autumn of 1557; seven years later, on April 26th, according to the parish register, was baptized William, their first son and third child. A tradition, seemingly well grounded, that the poet died on the anniversary of his birth, has led to the general acceptance of April 23d as his birthday.

Nothing more is heard of Shakespeare until 1582, the

year of his marriage, but his father's doings are recorded with considerable fullness. He continued to grow in importance in municipal affairs until, in 1571, he became chief alderman of the city. After the next year, however, he began to lose interest in public life. His family had become large and expensive; he was for some reason in constant need of large sums of money; he began to mortgage his property, and for the next ten or fifteen years his life was a constant struggle with financial difficulties. His loss of fortune, however, did not deprive his sons of educational privileges. The grammar school of the town provided free tuition, and the young poet doubtless became one of its pupils; but his education could not have been a broad one, even had he received all that the school had to give. "The instruction," says Lee, "was mainly confined to the Latin language and literature," but what the average student actually acquired of this subject was probably not large.

Shakespeare doubtless left the school early. According to Rowe, his first biographer, he was taken away at the age of fourteen, doubtless to assist his father in his business. We know that at eighteen he was married to Anne Hathaway, a maiden of the neighborhood, who was eight years his senior, and that in 1585, at the age of twenty-one, he was the father of three children. Then we hear no more of him until suddenly he appears in London as a successful actor and playwright. The whole period from the date of his marriage until 1592 is almost unknown, but in the absence of authentic record, tradition and conjecture have been exceedingly busy. According to Rowe, he left Stratford to avoid prosecution for deer-stealing, a story that is not improbable; according to

others, he left for London with a strolling band of players that had visited his native town; and according to still others, he set out on foot for the great metropolis to seek his fortune and found his first employment in holding horses before the theaters. Such stories must be read with caution. It is certain, however, that Shakespeare must have been in London as early as 1586, or the year following, and that he must have found early employment in one of the theaters. At first this must have been of the simplest and most menial nature, but gradually as he gained experience and confidence he doubtless was entrusted with minor parts in the plays presented, and with the recasting and adapting of old dramas for the use of the company. His rapid rise was but the natural consequence of his sound common sense and business abilities, inherited from his father, and his undoubted quickness and sympathy and mental power. His country honesty and hard-headed sense kept him in a large degree out of the Bohemian life that was ruining so many of his fellow-workers; his earnestness and eagerness to succeed kept him from dissipating his powers.

The Elizabethan Theater. The condition of the English drama when Shakespeare first appeared in London has already been described. The theaters just outside the city bounds had begun their period of immense popularity. People of all classes filled them nightly and applauded the coarse comedy and fierce tragedy that were typical of the period. The accessories of the theater were of the rudest kind. The stage was a mere raised platform without scenery or illusion.

You shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other [declared Sir Philip Sidney], and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when

he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now ye shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave. While in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?—*Defense of Poesy.*

This accounts for the remarkable shifting of scene in the Elizabethan drama, a shifting that is often the despair of the modern stage manager. The scene changes constantly, as Hallam observed, for the simple reason that it does not change at all. The female rôles all through the era were played by boys. The theater was circular, with balconies one above the other for the better class of the audience, while the central space, "the pit," was occupied by the poorer classes, "the groundlings," who stood during the entire performance.

It is not hard to imagine the experiences of the sensitive, poetic country lad, who doubtless never before had left his native region, as he lived those early days in the mighty London whose very air was electric with the thrill of a new life. Everything must have appealed strongly to his imagination; everything must have made a profound impression. He appeared when the stage was passing through its most critical period. The drama, in the hands of Marlowe and the University Wits, was changing its form, and there must have been excited discussions behind the scenes of the playhouse. The susceptible young poet was eager to learn, eager to succeed, and in such an environment he matured rapidly.

The Period of Apprenticeship, 1586–1594. In the ab-

sence of stage effects the attention of the Elizabethan audience was drawn with peculiar force to the actual words of the drama. Where the modern manager seeks constantly for new settings and new costumes to make old plays attractive, the Elizabethan manager sought constantly to add new and striking passages, to make new arrangements of scenes, and to change generally the effect of the play. Skillful playwrights were, therefore, constantly in the employ of the theaters, and often they earned a double salary by acting as well as writing. There is plenty of evidence that Shakespeare was constantly upon the stage as an actor, that this at length became his real profession, and it is more than probable that he turned to the editing and writing of plays as a mere matter of business to add to the resources of his company and to eke out his regular salary.

Titus Andronicus, 1588–1590.[1]
1 Henry VI., 1590–1591.
Love's Labour's Lost, 1590.
Comedy of Errors, 1591.
1 and 2 Henry VI., 1591–1592.
Two Gentlemen of Verona, 1592–1593.
Venus and Adonis, 1593.[2]
Lucrece, 1593–1594.
Richard III., 1593.
Midsummer Night's Dream, 1593–1594.
Sonnets, 1595–1605.

The first work of Shakespeare of which we have any record is *Titus Andronicus*, an inferior tragedy, which the young playwright retouched and remodeled for immediate stage use. Nothing can better illustrate the condition of the English drama when Shakespeare began his work than this crude production. It is a history play written almost wholly from the popular standpoint. It appeals to the pit in almost every passage. Blood flows in true Teutonic profusion; there is no attempt to conceal it; only three of the original cast remain alive at the close of the play, and one of these is to be buried alive after

[1] The dates in this chapter are largely from Dowden's Primer.

[2] The date is from Lee's *Shakespeare*.

the last speech. The lines are violently end-stopped; the movement is heavy; the characters are mere figures. To realize Shakespeare's marvelous growth in art and power one has but to read in the light of his later work a few of even the best lines of this his earliest dramatic attempt. There is better work in the first part of *Henry VI.*, which Shakespeare doubtless touched more or less, but it is thoroughly pre-Shakespearian in form and spirit.

The first independent work of Shakespeare is found in his *Love's Labour 's Lost*, the *Comedy of Errors*, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and the *Midsummer Night's Dream.* Here for the first time we get an unobstructed glance at the young apprentice. They are just what we might expect of a marvelously gifted, enthusiastic young playwright who had had six or seven years of practical experience in a theater. They are, above all, the work of a young man who is experimenting, who has not yet discovered the secret of his strength. They are often extravagant, often full of elaborate imagery, of puns and rollicking wit and unbridled satire. The wild dreams and sensuous fancy of the poet often run to extremes. The *Comedy of Errors* is only a step removed from the boisterous and headlong comedy of the *Gammer Gurton* type. The plays are full of echoes. *Love's Labour 's Lost* and the delightfully fanciful *Midsummer Night's Dream* are imitations, more or less direct, of the fashionable John Lyly. Marlowe, too, exerted an early influence. There is evidence that Parts II and III of *Henry VI.* were revised by Shakespeare and Marlowe working in collaboration. The " mighty line " made a deep impression upon the young playwright. *Richard III.* is full of the spirit and style of Marlowe. Although the

great dramatist quickly ceased to imitate, although he had the power of transmuting the best things of all other poets into forms that became peculiarly his own, yet there can be no question that it was Marlowe who taught him the secret of imparting life to blank verse.

Shakespeare's Poems. Thus far dramatic work has been to Shakespeare only a matter of business. No one could look upon the drama as a permanent medium of literary expression. The young actor had helped revise and recast too many plays to hope that his own efforts would long retain the form that he had given them. Despite the fact that all classes save the Puritans patronized the theater, it was regarded generally as a place of ill repute. Its morals were more than doubtful; its refinement was not far above that of the vulgar throng. Altogether it could not be expected to be the disseminator of permanent literature. Moreover the early plays were not printed. The company that bought a drama guarded it with care, under the impression that printed copies would decrease its power to draw the public. But the young actor had visions of a literary career. The mighty burst of lyric song that had opened with the first notes of Sidney's sonnets was swelling about him. He had doubtless long been experimenting with rhyme, and in 1593 he made his "first appeal to the reading public" with *Venus and Adonis*, a sensuous and romantic poem of the type then so fashionable. That Shakespeare considered it his first permanent literary effort there can be no question; he declared in his dedication to the Earl of Southampton that it was the "first heir of his invention;" that the reading public regarded it as the poet's first real literary venture is attested by the burst of ap-

plause that greeted it and the many editions through which it immediately ran. Even up to the great days of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare was chiefly praised for his lyric poems. Emboldened by the success of this first venture, the poet next published *The Rape of Lucrece*, and when the sonnet era was at its height he began a sequence, which, however, was not completed until later years.

The Period of Growing Power, 1594–1601. In 1594 Shakespeare was in his thirtieth year. His powers were reaching the full strength of manhood; he had been trained by at least seven years of practical experience in the best playhouses of the time; he had been in constant contact with the brightest minds of the age; he had been in touch with one of the most teeming and electric eras in human history. The joyous thrill of the Armada year had not yet subsided. The fierce Marprelate controversy was echoing on every hand; the new burst of lyric song had just begun; *The Faerie Queene* had stirred the nation's fancy; Marlowe had ended his short and brilliant career; the University Wits were at their best,—what university since the world began could offer such a seven years of training?

Despite his success with *Venus and Adonis*, lyric poetry could be only an avocation with Shakespeare. Every year saw him bound more closely to the theater. His work was becoming exceedingly profitable: in 1599 he became a shareholder in the new Globe Theater; circumstance had decreed that the best efforts of his life should be directed toward the profession that he had first chosen. He could not even thus early have been unconscious of his real power. The theater and the public had already

recognized it. His early plays, while they abounded in crudities, had been welcomed as something new in English dramatic art. They had shown a marvelous imagination, an increasing power of characterization, a growing facility in the use of language and of dramatic verse. During the next seven years Shakespeare reached his full development as a dramatic artist. It was the period of gradual breaking away from all traditions. His end-stopped lines grow fewer and fewer; his rhyming couplets steadily decrease; his comedy, though rough and boisterous in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives*, grows more refined and artistic; his characters become more and more alive; his blank verse, like that in *The Merchant of Venice*, becomes marvelously flexible and sonorous. It was the period of maturing strength, and its themes and its tones are all what we might expect of vigorous early manhood. The poet's patriotism is intense; he delights in the national heroes. How fondly he dwells on that most English of sovereigns, Henry V.! He incarnates English types and sets them living before us. What creation in his whole marvelous gallery more lifelike than Sir John Falstaff! He studies English life with the minuteness of a realist,—what we know of Elizabethan tavern life we know from him. He is full of the mere joy of existence. His fancy, now extravagant and boisterous, now disciplined and refined, peoples the forest of Arden or ranges into Arcadia and unknown lands with classic names. He conceives his characters and scenes

Richard II., 1594.
King John, 1595.
Merchant of Venice, 1596.
Romeo and Juliet, 1596–1597 (?).
Taming of the Shrew, 1597 (?).
1 and 2 Henry IV., 1597–1598.
Merry Wives of Windsor, 1598.
Much Ado about Nothing, 1598.
As You Like It, 1599.
Henry V., 1599.
Twelfth Night, 1600–1601.

with ever-increasing power. We live with them and in them. Life seems a joyous, glorified holiday where dukes and kings and queens, clowns and boors, beautiful maidens and radiant lovers, join together in a world where all things are possible, a world that exists only in the dreams of healthy young manhood.

The Period of Maturity, 1601–1608. During the next seven years Shakespeare was in the fullness of his powers. He had now reached the point where all experiment ceased. His dramatic style had become spontaneous; he had thrown away all traditions of predecessors and was writing as a master. His mind had reached full maturity; deep reflective power and insight into character had come with maturing years. He could write now from a large experience of human life. The workings of the soul, the play of motives, the chain of circumstance, the majesty of life, now appealed to him as they do to all strong and earnest men.

It was at this point that, without apparent cause, the whole tone of his work suddenly changed. With the single exception of *Romeo and Juliet*, that " young man's achievement, the lyrical tragedy of youth, of love, of death," he had produced nothing but histories and joyous comedies. He now turned to the darkest themes of tragedy,—the hell of jealousy, of ingratitude, of " o'erweening ambition," of revenge. The seven deadly sins with all their attendant horrors hold high carnival, and the strong and the pure are helpless in their hands. Even his comedies became dark and ironical. As to what had so embittered the man we can only guess. In financial affairs he was prospering wonderfully. He had bought in 1597 the best house in his native village; he had suc-

ceeded in 1599 in obtaining for his family a coat of arms and a place among the gentry; he had purchased in 1602 one hundred and seven acres of the best land in Stratford, and he had shown other evidences of prosperity. But his only son had died in 1596, his friend Essex had gone to execution in 1602, and his early patron Southampton was in extreme danger. The poet complains bitterly of false friends and of fickle fortune. He is "in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes," he is an outcast, he is all alone, he despises his work, and even his life.

Julius Cæsar, 1601.
All 's Well that Ends Well, 1601–1602.
Hamlet, 1602.
Measure for Measure, 1603.
Troilus and Cressida, 1603 (?).
Othello, 1604.
King Lear, 1605.
Macbeth, 1606.
Antony and Cleopatra, 1607.
Coriolanus, 1607.
Timon of Athens, 1607–1608.

Whatever his frame of mind, however, his work during this era shows him to have been at the very summit of his powers. His four great tragedies, which followed each other in rapid succession, — *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*,—mark the highest literary achievement of the English mind, if not of the human race.

> Each one [says Ten Brink] has its own peculiar excellences, some points in which it surpasses the others. None of them can rival *Hamlet* in its truth to nature, and its wealth of psychological delineation. *Othello*, which follows directly upon *Hamlet*, surpasses all the others in the strength of its dramatic effects, culminating in the third act, which is indeed, dramatically, the most thrilling act in all his writings. The succeeding tragedy, *Macbeth*, stands alone by its grand simplicity of conception and the originality of its execution, giving us in a few bold strokes a consummate picture of the strange workings of a human soul. But it is in *King Lear* that the poet attains the summit of his tragic powers. Higher than in *Lear* Shakespeare could not rise.

During all of this period Shakespeare produced no inferior work. His *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*,

and *Coriolanus* are well-nigh equal in conception and dramatic art to his greatest masterpieces. In every line there is the conscious power, the marvelous skill, the profound knowledge of human life that Shakespeare alone possessed.

The Period of Retirement, 1608–1616. With *Timon of Athens*, which doubtless was largely the work of another playwright, ended the period of tragedies. The four remaining plays of Shakespeare are romantic in their themes and happy in their endings. The atmosphere is one of lofty serenity; it is the peace after the storm. The dramatist writes from the fullness of experience; he has drunk life to the full, and he speaks with authority and precision. There is a grandeur, a compression of thought, a mastery of expression in parts of these plays that one will in vain seek for elsewhere. One has but to compare the best passages of his early works with this, for instance, from *The Tempest*, to realize in its fullness Shakespeare's marvelous growth:

Pericles, 1608.
Cymbeline, 1609.
The Tempest, 1610.
The Winter's Tale, 1610-1611.
Two Noble Kinsmen, 1612.
Henry VIII., 1612-1613.

> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

After 1611, when he doubtless disposed of his last stock in the London theaters, Shakespeare spent his remaining years in Stratford "in ease, retirement, and the

conversation of his friends." If we except two fragmentary plays that doubtless passed under his hand, he did no more dramatic work. He had won the ideal of his life and he cared for no more honors. The details of his last years have not come down to us. We know only that he died on April 23, 1616, and that he was buried in the parish church of his native town, where his bones still repose.

Shakespeare's Place and Influence. To study in detail the plays of Shakespeare, to dwell upon his myriad moods, and to analyze the elements of his dramatic art is not within the province of this chapter. The student must do this work for himself; he must study with the best apparatus at his command all of the leading plays, for no education is complete without a full knowledge of the best creations of the great dramatist. This chapter can investigate only the gradual development of Shakespeare from his surroundings and his era, and determine his place in the history of the English drama and his influence upon his successors.

It must be realized first of all that Shakespeare was a natural development; that he was not a supernatural genius who arose unheralded and unaccounted for,—an inspired peasant who warbled spontaneously his "native wood-notes wild." The contrast between the poet's birth and early training and the marvelous creations of his later years is so great that many sober critics have taken refuge in the theory that Lord Bacon, and not Shakespeare, wrote the plays, a theory that seems to us not worth refuting. Others have accepted Shakespeare as a pure and unaccountable genius, like Morphy, the chess player, or Colburn, the mathematician. But there is no

need of such subterfuges. Shakespeare was only one result of a great literary movement. The same forces that produced him produced a score of other dramatists of almost equal magnitude. He is only the loftiest peak in a great mountain range which was elevated all at once by the same primal impulse. That he surpassed all of his contemporaries was due wholly to the harmonious blending of the elements of his nature. There was scarcely a dramatist of the era but what equaled or even surpassed him at some one point. In Shakespeare the elements of strength were evenly balanced.

The circumstances of his early life need not trouble us. His family was by no means of peasant blood; the Ardens had at one time been prominent among the gentry. From his mother the poet inherited a sensitive and refined nature; from his father he received the practical and active temperament that served as a balance to his poetic side. He was a perfect blend of the Celtic and the Teutonic elements. He had the sensitive, sympathetic, intuitive nature of the Celt, and it was this that made him the "sweetest Shakespeare," the man idolized by his contemporaries, and that allowed him to project himself into the lives of others, to feel intensely their joys, their passions, their woes. He had the fancy, the lightness, the humor, the nervous energy of the Celt, but blended with it all he had the masculine vigor, the serious, often gloomy, outlook, the hard common sense of the Teuton. It is hard to say which element predominates in the poet. The *Midsummer Night's Dream* is all Celtic, but *Macbeth* may be compared even with *Beowulf* as to its Teutonism. There is no squeamishness about the poet; blood flows freely even in his best tragedies:

Hamlet ends almost as bloodily as does *Titus Andronicus* and the pre-Shakespearian tragedies. It was the perfect blending of these two diverse elements that gave him his power.

Moreover, Shakespeare's education need not trouble us. He lived during the active period of his life amid an environment that was tenfold better than any university, and the marvelous epoch of which he was a part developed him, unlike so many of his contemporaries, symmetrically. It created in him no theories; it placed him upon no hobbies. His very lack of a university course tended to make him more sane and tolerant.

His dramatic art was no accident; it grew from a long practical experience with the stage and a careful study of the public wants. He threw himself with all his Teutonic energy into his chosen profession. The youth who at twenty-two was penniless and unknown in a vast city, at thirty-three was able to purchase the best estate in his native town, to procure for his family a patent of nobility, and to win the patronage of royalty itself. This alone is enough to show the intensity with which he had practiced his profession. He was first of all a practical, studious, hard-working caterer to the wants of the theater-going public. It was the ruling thought of his whole life to make his every line count upon his audiences, to hold his hearers within his grasp, and to move them as he would. As an actor in his own plays he had a chance to study the effect of his work; his characters stood living before him in the persons of his fellow-players; it was as if he wrote with his characters actually in the flesh about him and in the presence of his audience. To do this was to make a successful play, and success-

ful plays meant increased income, a worthy home for his declining years, and the honor and respect of all men.

His marvelous grasp upon the meaning of life, his insight into human character, and his knowledge of every round of human experience came from his quick sympathy and intuition and his wide acquaintance with gifted men in an era of great intellectual activity. His knowledge of external nature, of country life and scenes, came from his early experiences at Stratford. He was an accurate observer, and he knew the birds and flowers as well as did Chaucer. He is seldom at fault in his descriptions and allusions, but to him external nature was but the background for the play of human character, and in the absence of all scenery on the early stage he elaborated his backgrounds with peculiar minuteness and care. Nature is ever in sympathy with the action. Lovers ever woo in the moonlight amid the flowers; murderers ever work at midnight to the accompaniment of the owl and the storm.

The influence of Shakespeare upon later literature can hardly be estimated. He created no sudden revolution; he was no literary dictator like his contemporary, Jonson. He illustrates perfectly the old fable of the contest between the wind and the sun. His contemporaries, who were all men of broader education, did not dream of his transcendent superiority, and he took no pains to impress it upon them.

He was "gentle Shakespeare" to them [declares Gosse], and they loved both the man and his poetry. That he excelled them at every point, as the oak excels the willow, this, had it been whispered at the Mermaid, would have aroused smiles of derision. . . . It must not be forgotten that his works made no definite appeal to the reading class until after his

death. The study of "Shakespeare" as a book cannot date farther back than 1623.

But the quiet, pervasive influence of Shakespeare's work told upon the playgoing public. After a taste of his marvelous dramas it was impossible to satisfy them with anything else. Jonson might propound with vigor his learned theories; it was the sun working silently and gently that won. After *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear*, it was impossible for the English stage to develop anything but the strong romantic drama.

Three Centuries of Shakespeare. During the centuries since the close of the Elizabethan era Shakespeare has had a varied career. The Restoration stage preferred its drama in the French style; Shakespeare was altered and "improved" remorselessly. During the classic "Augustan period" the great dramatist was looked upon as a "rude and Gothic genius" who sang "wood-notes wild," but who sadly needed polish. In the middle of the eighteenth century David Garrick, the actor, began his revival of the old dramatist, which soon resulted in a "Shakespeare fever." Soon afterwards began the era of Shakespearian scholars,—Dr. Johnson, Capell, Steevens, Malone, and others,—who industriously collected every scrap of textual information. It was not until 1814, however, when Coleridge began his celebrated series of lectures, that modern Shakespearian criticism, which is constructive and sympathetic, may be said to have begun. Since then Shakespeare has been the supreme figure in English literature. The Germans have studied his plays as if they were a part of the phenomena of Nature herself, and the English have written voluminously upon every phase of his work. The growth

of Shakespeare as an educating power has been constant all through the present century, until to-day he is studied by every schoolboy, and his works, in annotated editions for every possible use, are like leaves in the autumn forests.

Such was Shakespeare. It is impossible for us to do more than introduce him to the reader. He is in himself a literature, and to treat adequately his art and his personality would require volumes. Yet no amount of criticism could describe the man better than he has done himself in his comment upon Brutus in *Julius Cæsar:*

> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a Man!"

REQUIRED READING. The minimum reading of Shakespeare should include *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Richard III.*, *Henry V.*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*.

CHAPTER XXII

BEN JONSON AND HIS CIRCLE

He stands alone, colossal, iron-jointed, the behemoth of the drama.—*Symonds*.

THE years between 1593 and 1616 are so filled with the radiance of Shakespeare that we are liable to forget that other dramatists of originality and power were at work during the same era. The same conditions that had produced the master dramatist produced, as we have already remarked, a school of playwrights whose productions, even had there arisen no Shakespeare, would have made the age a glorious one. Contemporary criticism was unjust to Shakespeare. He won the hearts of the people with his romantic creations, but the scholars of the period, the literary critics and dramatic experts, by no means awarded to him the preëminent place that he has since gained. The real literary master of the age, the culmination of correct dramatic art, was, almost by acclamation of the critics, the ponderous Ben Jonson. Near him in learned esteem stood the classic Chapman and the more romantic Dekker, Heywood, and Marston. It was this group of dramatists that, with Marlowe and Shakespeare, made the golden age of the Elizabethan drama.

1. Ben Jonson (1573–1637)

Authorities. The standard edition of Jonson has long been **Gifford's**, first issued in 1816; more modern and

helpful editions, however, are those by **Nicholson** and **Herford** (Mermaid Series) and by **Cunningham.** The *Notes of Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* (Shakespeare Society) is the chief original authority on the life of the poet; the most helpful recent life is **Symonds'** in English Worthies Series. **Swinburne,** *Study of Ben Jonson*, a somewhat glowing picture; **Bell,** *The Poems of Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, and Ben Jonson*, and **Schelling,** *Ben Jonson's Timber*, are valuable helps.

Never was there a more perfect contrast than that between the two leading dramatists of the Elizabethan age. They were results of precisely the same general conditions, they received their dramatic experience in the same school; they did their strongest work during the same decade; yet the plays of Jonson, while just as original as those of Shakespeare, belong to an utterly different world. The early life of the two poets was radically different. The childhood and youth of Jonson were spent in London. While Shakespeare was studying the fields and the birds, country types and scenes, Jonson was threading the narrow streets of the great metropolis, noting its teeming life and its curious personages; or was receiving at the hands of the scholar Cambden the beginnings of a ponderous education. Unlike Shakespeare, his temperament was prevailingly Teutonic. He was irascible, overbearing, intolerant; he lacked the quick sympathy and the Celtic intuition of his elder brother in the Muse; he was large of limb, muscular, and in later life unwieldy and unhealthy of body; he drank with Teutonic freedom; his appetite was enormous. Shakespeare's imagination was quick and restless; he seldom blotted a line; he threw off his work almost carelessly. Jonson elaborated his

lines slowly and with extreme labor; he spent weeks and months in the planning of his work and the careful perfecting of its parts. Shakespeare threw his heart and soul into his chosen profession; he studied his audiences, and with marvelous intuition built up a dramatic art that would appeal to them at every point: Jonson hated the people and the popular stage, and he abandoned them at the first opportunity. He would not, longer than he could help, make himself "a page to that strumpet the stage." To him the audience was "the beast, the multitude. They love nothing that is right and proper." He would not please them; he would educate them to like what they should. People go to the theaters to be amused not to be educated, and it is not strange that Jonson's plays never succeeded. All of his work for the popular stage, he once declared, netted him scarce £200. Shakespeare is ever the "gentle Shakespeare" with his contemporaries; he figures not at all in any of the fierce controversies of the era; his theories of dramatic art he never formulated; his fellow-artists he never criticised: but a wild battle raged about Jonson during his whole career.

He was born for strife. In his youth he had run away from his stepfather, who would make of him a bricklayer, and had joined the army in the Netherlands, where "he had in face of both campes, killed ane enemie and taken *opima spolia* from him." Later, after returning to England and joining a theater company, he had slain in a duel a fellow-actor, for which crime he had narrowly escaped the gallows. He would be master wherever he went; he would say the last word concerning literary art; "but his rivals," says Minto, "had too much

respect for themselves to give way absolutely to his authority. They refused to be as grasshoppers in his sight," and the result we know. He carried on a wordy war with Dekker, and he even used personal violence upon Marston.

His Period of Dramatic Work. Jonson was doubtless drawn into dramatic work much as was Shakespeare. He began as an editor of old plays, and as a collaborator with other playwrights. His first significant comedy, *Every Man in His Humour*, was first acted in 1596, and following this there appeared before 1616, which closed his first dramatic period, no less than nine prominent comedies and two tragedies. His conception of the drama was far different from Shakespeare's. He defended with vigor the canons of Aristotle; from his earliest prologue in *Every Man in His Humour* to the last pages of his *Timber* he insisted upon a rigid observance of the dramatic unities. But Jonson was not a man to follow long the leadership of a master, even though he were Aristotle himself. His comedy was a new creation, neither classical nor romantic. He took the classic stage properties and traditions and re-created them even as Shakespeare re-created the romantic drama. His work is true, in a degree, to the unities, especially the unity of time; it is carefully elaborated in plot, and it is skillfully combined. Its accumulation of incident, its movement of characters, and its studied organic unity are well-nigh perfect. He took all of his materials from contemporary low life; he made his own plots; he studied, with all the minute pains of a realist, every type of

> Shark, squire, impostor, many persons more
> Whose manners, now called humours, feed the stage.

It is the delineation of these humors, these personal peculiarities, "extravagant habits, passions, or affectations" of the low classes that makes up the comedy of Jonson. His two earliest titles strike the keynote of all his work; every man is in his own humor during the first four acts of the comedy, and, as Minto remarks, out of his humor in the last act. In other words, each character has his own distinguishing mark which we never for a moment are allowed to forget,—he is a miser, a hypocrite, a glutton, a parasite, a quack, a shrew, and throughout the whole comedy he emphasizes with every action and word his ruling passion. The glutton does nothing but eat and talk of eating; the miser never thinks or speaks of anything but gold; the hypocrite never for an instant forgets his whine and his pious cant. The various humors triumph during the first four acts: the impostors dupe all who meet them; the scoundrels have nothing but success; but all receive poetic justice in the last act. All the characters are extremes. Volpone, the aged miser, who feigns mortal sickness that his possible heirs may bring him presents; Morose, the churlish old misanthrope of *The Silent Woman*, who is morbidly sensitive to noise; the miserly Mannon in *The Alchemist;* the hypocritical Puritan, Zeal-of-the-Hand Busy in *Bartholomew Fair*, and indeed every character the poet has drawn is an impossible creature, a mere caricature of humanity. Jonson's object in such extreme pictures was to make vice and shams detested by simply showing them in exaggerated forms. But caricature never reforms; mere distortion can only provoke curiosity and mirth. Jonson saw only the outside of things; his lack of intuition and sympathy made him a mere painter of

grotesque masks. Of the struggles of the soul and the motives of the heart he never dreamed. He is rather a satirist; his wit is brilliant but it leaves a cruel sting. "He had," says Lowell, "a keen and ready eye for the comic in situation, but no humor." He sneers at humanity; we laugh at his creations, never with them; they are mere figures in hideous disguises, that fail to move us by their very grotesqueness. In his superabundance of characters and his caricature-like creations he reminds us of Dickens, but the great novelist possessed the sympathy and the toleration that gave life to his characters, distorted though they sometimes are, while Jonson seldom made anything but wooden figures.

Jonson twice attempted tragedy, but with small success. *Sejanus* and *Catiline* are studies in Roman history, passionless and unsympathetic. They do not appeal to the hopes and fears of humanity; they are learned and classical; they have all the accuracy and coldness of a marble frieze.

At Court. In 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, there opened a new era in the life of Jonson. He was granted a pension by the Crown and he was made poet laureate, an honor officially given for the first time. During the next ten years he wrote only for aristocratic circles. He addressed lyrics and epigrams to noble patrons, he made songs in various keys, he created large numbers of masques which were given elaborate stage settings by such artists as Inigo Jones, and performed before the king and his court, and he wrote his two

THE LAUREATES.

1616–1637. Ben Jonson.
1637–1668. William Davenant.
1670–1688. John Dryden.
1689–1692. Thomas Shadwell.
1692–1715. Nahum Tate.
1715–1718. Nicholas Rowe.
1718–1730. Lawrence Eusden.
1730–1757. Colley Cibber.

1757-1785. William Whitehead.
1785-1790. Thomas Warton.
1790-1813. Henry James Pye.
1813-1843. Robert Southey.
1843-1850. William Wordsworth.
1850-1892. Alfred Tennyson.
1894 ——. Alfred Austin.

beautiful apostrophes to Shakespeare, which are now doubtless the most widely known of all his works. During this era he became the recognized leader of English poets, the first of that line of literary kings whose best-known representatives in later years are Dryden and Dr. Johnson.

The Last Period of his Life, which dates from 1625, was sad in the extreme. His irregular life had given him an enormous, "tun-like body," inflicted with many infirmities. The death of James had for several years deprived him of his usual income, and he turned again to his old profession for support. But his later comedies added little to his fame or fortune; all that he did during these declining years must rank among "his dotages." He held for a time a minor office in London, but he soon lost even this and troubles gathered thickly about him. Palsied, dropsical, bedridden, he passed his last days almost alone. He died on the 6th of August, 1637, and was buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. In later years a stranger in the city, noticing the unmarked slab over his grave, gave orders for the simple inscription, "O rare Ben Jonson."

His Style and Rank. Jonson's masques are sometimes light and graceful, and in connection with the gorgeous settings amid which they first appeared they doubtless were really charming. But much of their beauty has evaporated since the days of their first triumphs, and to most readers now they are dull and spiritless. The little lyrics, however, scattered everywhere among them, are often of dainty finish. It was as a lyrist that Jonson

came the nearest to true spontaneous art. His epigrams are marvels of compression, and such songs as "It is not growing like a tree," and "Drink to me only with thine eyes," and "For love's sake kiss me once again," prepared the way for such lyric masters as Herrick.

As a dramatist Jonson marks the first significant symptom of the reaction against the imaginative school, and he thus became the parent of the dramatists of the Restoration. He appealed to the intellect rather than to the imagination and the feelings. Among the romanticists he was a realist in the modern sense of the term. He sought not for the beautiful and the ideal but for the repulsive and the disgusting, and he pictured them faithfully from every standpoint. He was material rather than spiritual, and thus he struck the first note of decadence. He would have had Shakespeare blot a thousand lines, but he loved the man and would not have dreamed of actually doing the blotting himself. It was but a step to the generation that actually did blot the thousand lines and more.

Jonson's excellences lay in his constructive power, his perfection of plot, and his ingenuity of intellect; in the vast range of his learning and his observation, and in his perfect sincerity and honesty. He was, in the words of Crofts,

> a great, high-minded spirit, of high standards, shocked with the immorality of his time, longing to be its teacher; showing the bad effects of his divorce from his age in the pompous-pedantic tone, the consciousness with which he enunciates sentiments whose morality he knows will strike unpleasantly a popular audience, in the brutal coarseness of some of his plays, when contemporary manners are represented at their worst in order to point a moral.

The courage, the vigor and manliness of Jonson which

crushed all opposition by sheer force, his vast intellect, and his marvelous industry will ever endear him to all who love the English character.

The Mermaid Inn. The life of Jonson brings before us for the first time an institution that was to play an increasing part in the development of English literature. There were no clubs in Elizabethan days, but their places were amply supplied by the inns, where gathered night after night merry bands of congenial spirits. The Mermaid early became the headquarters of actors and playwrights. Here, evening after evening, gathered that immortal band headed by Shakespeare and Jonson, Heywood and Marston and Fletcher, to hold contests both wet and witty, which there was no Boswell to record.

> Many were the wit-combats [wrote Fuller in his *Worthies*] 'twixt him and Ben Jonson, which two I beheld like a Spanish great galleon and an English man of war ; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances ; Shakespear, with the English man of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention.

Beaumont, in a letter to Jonson, thus described the meetings in this famous hostelry:

> What things we have seen
> Done at the Mermaid? heard words that have been
> So nimble and so full of subtle flame
> As if every one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life.

In later years Jonson frequented other inns,—the Sun, the Dog, the Triple Tun. But it was the old Devil

Tavern at Temple Bar where he so long ruled the Apollo Club as literary dictator. Here he gathered about him the "Tribe of Ben," a band of young writers and men of station who hung breathless upon his words, men who were to be rulers during the next literary era,—Herrick, Suckling, Brome, Cartwright, Field, Howell, and many others.

The era of the inn and the coffee-house did not end until after the days of the Old Cheshire Cheese and the reign of Samuel Johnson. For a century and more the public house was to be a dominating element in English literature.

REQUIRED READING. The best comedies of Jonson are *Every Man in His Humour* (in the London Series, and Temple Dramatists), *The Alchemist* (in Thayer's *Best Elizabethan Plays*), *Volpone the Fox*, and *The Silent Woman*. The student should read at least the first two, the poems eulogizing Shakespeare, and a selection of lyrics from *Underwoods*.

2. George Chapman (1559?–1634)

Authorities. **Shepherd,** *Chapman's Plays*, and **Phelps,** *Best Plays of Chapman*, in Mermaid Series, and **Swinburne,** *The Poems and Minor Translations of Chapman*, are the most helpful editions. **Swinburne,** *George Chapman: An Essay*, and **Lowell's** essay in *Old English Dramatists* are suggestive and helpful studies. **Shepherd's** edition of *Chapman's Homer* is regarded as the standard. See also **Matthew Arnold's** essay *On Translating Homer.*

To the majority of readers Chapman is known only as the translator of Homer and the inspirer of Keats' exquisite sonnet. Had he done nothing besides this translation he would still be a large figure in the Elizabethan

age, but he was a dramatist as well, and a popular one, even in the days of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. His life is almost unknown. He was born in Kent, he was educated in both universities, and he first appeared in London in 1594. In the following year he produced with Jonson and Marston a play entitled *Eastward Ho!* which, on account of certain reflections upon the Scotch, brought its authors for a time into prison. Again in 1606 he was forced to flee from the wrath of the French ambassador, who had been greatly offended by *The Duke of Biron*. We know little else concerning the dramatist save the dates of his plays and a few contemporary allusions.

As a Dramatist Chapman may be described as a ponderous and reflective Marlowe. His genius was epic rather than dramatic. He loved a brilliant hero, one of colossal mold:

> Give me a spirit that on this life's rough sea
> Loves to have his sails filled with a lusty wind,
> Even till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,
> And his rapt ship run on her side so low
> That she drinks water and her keel plows air.
> There is no danger to a man who knows
> What life and death is.

He delighted in stirring deeds on land and sea. His tragedies are the lives of heroes who, like Tamburlaine, go from triumph to triumph. The minor actors are obscured in the fierce light shed on the central figure. There is little attempt at character analysis; there is no laying bare of the heart and the soul, but everywhere there is a striving after the grand and the extraordinary. Webster speaks of Chapman's "full and heightened

style," and indeed there are places in his dramas that are free-aired and vast, that thrill and exhilarate us with their force and sweep. But he sometimes, like Marlowe, goes beyond safe limits and makes mere bombast. He sought, in his own words, to

> Shun common and plebeian forms of speech.

But he had not the passion and the lightness of touch of his younger rival. He had more restraint; he was ponderous and didactic. He had learned from Jonson that a drama should teach a lesson, and accordingly he is often tedious and pedantic. He was by nature grave and speculative; Wood mentions him as a "person of most reverend aspect, religious and temperate." His extravagance came by flashes; his dramas are not, like Marlowe's, all of a piece; no writer was ever more uneven. He describes with vigor and fire a duel with six contestants, and at the critical moment when it seems as if the hero will prove to be the sole surviving victor, he pauses for a long Homeric simile. It is for this reason that he is best read in selections; there are passages in his works that equal anything produced during the whole period, but the dramas as a whole are of inferior merit. They are full, as Dryden remarked, of "dwarfish thought dressed up in gigantic words, repetition in abundance, looseness of expression, and gross hyperbole, the sense of one line prodigiously expanded into ten."

His comedy falls below his tragedy. He was superior to Jonson in force and fire, but he lacked his master's comic vein and his skill and constructive power.

> Nearly all of his comedies [says Lowell] are formless and coarse, but

with what seems to me a kind of stiff and willful coarseness, as if he were trying to make his personages speak in what he supposed to be their proper dialect, in which he himself was unpracticed, having never learned it in those haunts, familiar to most of his fellow-poets, where it was vernacular. . . . He thought he was being comic, and there is, on the whole, no more depressing sight than a naturally grave man under that delusion.

He constantly depreciated woman, and he invariably dealt with the baser motives and passions. *All Fools*, one of his early titles, might, as Minto remarks, be given as the title to all of his comedies. Not one character in them rises above the ignoble level.

Chapman's Homer. It was in his translation of Homer that Chapman did by far his best work. The epic bent of his nature found in Homer a congenial field, and he threw himself with his whole soul into the translation. He believed that he had been born to accomplish this one task. He brought to Homer the Elizabethan view of life, its humors and its fantasticalities, its freedom and its exuberance, its lyric inspiration, its unbounded youth and hope. He brought his own poetic peculiarities, his love of action, of the sea, of the deeds of heroes. He took unwarranted liberties with the text; he twisted it everywhere to conform to his own personality and ideals; he expanded and changed the similes, and added whatever and whenever he pleased. The result was a work that Coleridge declared "as truly an original poem as *The Faerie Queene*. It will," he adds, "give you small idea of Homer, though a far truer one than Pope's epigrams or Cowper's cumbersome, most anti-Homeric Miltonism. For Chapman writes and feels as a poet, as Homer might have written had he lived in England in

the reign of Queen Elizabeth." Assuredly it is not Homer as some have maintained. "I confess," says Matthew Arnold, "that I can never read twenty lines of Chapman's version without recurring to Bentley's cry, 'This is not Homer.'" Yet the great critic freely admits that Chapman is "plain-spoken, fresh, vigorous, and to a certain degree rapid, and all these are Homeric qualities."

It is not too much to claim for Chapman's translation what the poet himself would not for a moment have admitted: that it is well-nigh an original creation and that it comes nearer to being a native Elizabethan epic than anything else written during the era. It came at the very flood-tide of the creative period, when the air was full of music and electric with creative energy. If it is not a distinct and original epic, it nevertheless is Homer set to the marvelous Elizabethan music.

REQUIRED READING. At least one book of *Chapman's Homer;* also Keats' sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."

3. Thomas Heywood (1581?–1640?)

Authorities. **Pearson,** *The Works of Heywood,* 6 vols.; *Best Plays of Heywood and of Decker,* Mermaid Series; *Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker* (London, 1873); *Marston's Works* in **Bullen's** English Dramatists, 3 vols.

Among the minor dramatists of the earlier days who began their work with Shakespeare and Jonson, and who belong to the same original and spontaneous school, the most conspicuous are Heywood, Marston, and Dekker. Of none of them have we more than the fragments of a

biography. They are mere names, vague shadows that flit through the era, leaving nothing of their personality and history save what may be gathered from their dramas. They grew, like Shakespeare, from the popular stage; they were taught by Marlowe and the University Wits, and unlike Jonson they followed romantic models. While they sometimes did exceedingly well, while in some things they approached the great master of the epoch, they had not his symmetry of power, his all-embracing intuition, his artistic sense, his knowledge of life. They are, taken for all in all, distinctly minor figures when we compare them with Shakespeare; they made no significant addition to the drama as he left it; they contributed not even to the decline of the period, and consequently we need not examine closely their work. A study of Heywood, who may be taken as a type of this whole school of dramatists, will show their prevailing characteristics, their mastery of certain phases of dramatic art, their fatal defects.

The chief merit of Heywood lies in his mastery of pathos and his power to depict scenes and characters in humble life. He delighted in rural pictures, in the delineation of country types and customs,—in touching stories of love amid humble surroundings. Nowhere, not even in Shakespeare, do we get nearer to the cottage hearth, and the picture is ever tender and sympathetic, for Heywood was "the gentlest of all poets that have swept the chords of passion." He had none of Marston's fierce satire, or his blood and thunder:

> We use no drum nor trumpet, nor dumb show;
> As song, dance, masque, to bombast out a play,

he declares in his *English Traveller;* he has none of Jonson's cynicism or Chapman's depreciation of woman. His characters are charming and simple; we feel even for the guilty ones; there are times when we see the very soul of the victim. The agony of Frankford in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, when he discovers the faithlessness of his wife:

> O God! O God! that it were possible
> To undo things done; to call back yesterday!
> That Time could turn up his swift sandy glass,
> To untell the days, and to redeem these hours!
> Or that the sun
> Could, rising from the west, draw his coach backward,
> Take from the account of time so many minutes
> Till he had all these seasons called again,
> Those minutes, and those actions done in them,
> Even from her first offense; that I might take her
> As spotless as an angel in my arms!
> But, oh! I talk of things impossible
> And cast beyond the moon;

the grief of Bess in *The Fair Maid of the West* when compelled to part with the picture of her love whom she believes to be dead:

> O thou, the perfect semblance of my love
> And all that 's left of him, take one sweet kiss
> As my last sad farewell! Thou resemblest him
> For whose sweet safety I was every morning
> Down on my knees, and with the lark's sweet tunes
> I did begin my prayers; and when sad sleep
> Had charmed all eyes, when none save the bright stars
> Were up and waking, I remembered thee;

and many other passages come in pathos and intensity very near to Shakespeare's level. Dekker alone can

stand with Heywood, after Shakespeare, as a delineator of grief and tenderness and as an interpreter of the feminine heart.

Where Heywood failed was in sustained dramatic art. He could not follow the gradual unfolding of character. His personages act often without sufficient motive: the wife of Frankford, a faithful and charming creature, yields suddenly to crime for no apparent reason. The plays are extremely uneven. Often through a whole drama, as in *The Wise Woman of Hogsden*, we find nothing that moves us. We are interested; the story is well told, but there is no passion, no appeal to the deeper emotions. The poetry has been omitted; we think of Lamb's criticism of Heywood as "a sort of prose Shakespeare." Had the poet been able to maintain himself at the heights that he sometimes reached; had he studied more carefully the heart-life of his characters at every point as the play developed, instead of only at the periods of crisis; had he striven more for unity of plot and characterization,—he might have raised himself far above the minor figures among whom he now moves.

Despite his defects, however, despite the blots that ever and anon disfigure his work, Heywood is a thoroughly enjoyable writer. It is often a sore task to read Jonson; one positively rebels before some of Chapman's work,—but no one can despise Heywood. Whatever he does, he never fails to interest. He has a dash of romance and adventure, a collection of interesting characters, a touch of pathos and of sentiment that are irresistible. We come to love the man and to name his plays among our favorite books to be read more than once. To the average reader, who cares nothing for the critics, *The*

Fair Maid of the West, despite its defects, is worth more than Jonson's whole repertory.

REQUIRED READING. *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is Heywood's strongest play, but many will find more delightful the first part of *The Fair Maid of the West* (Mermaid Series).

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DECLINE OF THE DRAMA

NOTHING in English literary history is more marvelous than the story of the sudden rise, the rapid maturity, the transcendent achievements, and the quick decay of the Elizabethan drama. It was a period of scarce fifty years, sharply defined at its beginning by the earliest work of Marlowe and at its end by the sudden cessation of all dramatic work in 1642 when the theaters were closed by the Puritans. It was a period of enormous production. The crowd of playwrights and the mass of plays that meet the investigator are almost bewildering. It is like the enormous flood of novels that has filled our present era, with the important difference that only a comparatively small number of the Elizabethan dramas were ever printed. Heywood's extant works comprise some twenty-three plays, but we have his own word in the introduction to his *English Traveller* that the play was one out of two hundred and twenty in which he had "had either an entire hand or at least a whole finger." Many plays disappeared even during the lifetime of their authors.

True it is [declares Heywood] that my plays are not exposed unto the world in volumes, to bear the title of works (as others); one reason is that many of them by shifting and change of companies have been negligently lost; others of them are still retained in the hands of some actors, who think it against their peculiar profit to have them come in print, and a third that it never was any great ambition in me, to be in this kind voluminously read.

Many plays have come to us in a garbled and fragmentary condition. Reporters were often sent to the theater to take down for publication as best they could the words of a successful but closely guarded play. Many excellent dramas are anonymous, preserved by accident or by the tradition that they were the work of Shakespeare. *Arden of Faversham*, *Edward III.*, and *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* are conspicuous examples.

A large number of the plays are collaborations. We are seldom sure that a play was the individual work of a single writer. Often three or four worked in unison. The greater part of Dekker's productions bear evidence of other hands; Ford and Webster constantly assisted other playwrights; Fletcher worked with Shakespeare on *Henry VIII.*, and perhaps on *Two Noble Kinsmen;* Marlowe helped compose *Henry VI.*, and Beaumont and Fletcher worked together until they became "the twin stars of the English literary firmament." This practice of collaboration gives a surprising uniformity to the Elizabethan drama. The constant revision of older works, often by several playwrights, the constant dwelling together of dramatists, the frequency of joint production, and the surprising lack of interest which writers took in their own creations tended to bring the drama to a dead level of excellence.

Notwithstanding the shortness of the era four distinct phases may be detected in it: first, the period of transition from the old types of tragedy and comedy to the new forms of Shakespeare and Jonson; second, the period of culmination, the golden era of spontaneous and lavish production; third, the period of premeditated creation, of dramatic art which was the result of a careful study of

models from the earlier school; and last, the period of rapid decline.

In reality the decadence began during the lifetime of Shakespeare. The first rapturous outburst of creative energy which so filled the last years of Elizabeth subsided almost as suddenly as it began. Reaction was inevitable. The rank growth of immorality, of superficiality in all things, of inordinate vanity, and of ruinous luxury was beginning to bear abundant fruit. There was a marked decline in the national life, and the new sovereign, who had inherited the Tudor ideals without the Tudor force to animate them, was partly responsible. Narrow, pedantic, cowardly, he did not impress, as Elizabeth had done, the national imagination. He was immeasurably inferior to her at almost every point. He was weak and wavering; his foreign policy lost for England nearly all that had been gained during the preceding reign; he was bigoted and intolerant; his religious policy stirred again the old passions of the nation. The people were divided more and more into two sharply differentiated factions: the gay *Cavaliers*, the remnant of the Tudor courtiers, the embodiment of all the luxury and display, the brightness and joyousness, the worldliness and vice, of the Elizabethan age; and the grim *Puritans*, the heirs of Langland and of Wyclif, of Tyndale and Latimer, with their intense hatred of all sensuous beauty and mere art and their loud condemnation of the vanity and immorality of the age.

The Puritans from the first had fought against the theaters. They were the "devil's chapels," and stage plays were the devil's litanies. Under the intolerant hand of James both parties soon went to extremes. The

Cavalier stage became more and more corrupt. The humors of Ben Jonson, the first conspicuous signs of decline, were followed more and more by grotesque characterizations, studies of types built up from without. Instead of characters true to the great fundamental principles that underlie all human life, there began to appear studies of exceptions, deformities, abnormal types, monstrosities, displayed against an ingenious and sensational background. The tendency was increasingly towards comedy, towards light, fantastic variety. The strong old blank verse of Marlowe and Shakespeare was weakened and softened; foulness and immorality were introduced with ever-increasing frequency. The decline, at first gradual, became rapid, until, in the last decade before the closing of the theaters, the drama had almost hopelessly degenerated. It had not lost all the elements of its former glory; it was not until after the Restoration that English audiences could dispense with all that was spiritual and spontaneous in the drama; but even before the Puritan edict had put a mechanical stop to the period, it had in reality reached its final stage.

To explore the vast cemetery of *The British Dramatists*, to treat with fullness even the most prominent among the enormous number of playwrights who contributed to the work of the period, is not our intention. We can only select three or four typical figures and from their work study the characteristics and the causes of the decline.

1. Beaumont and Fletcher

Authorities. **Darley,** *The Old Dramatists*, new ed., 1883; The Mermaid Series, 2 vols.; **Dyce's** edition, 2 vols.; *Beaumont and Fletcher : Their Finest Scenes*, selected

by **Leigh Hunt**; **Golden,** *Brief History of the English Drama;* **Lowell's** essay in *Old English Dramatists;* **Gosse,** *Jacobean Poets;* **Macaulay,** *Francis Beaumont.*

The opening years of the dramatic era were dominated by the genius of Shakespeare; the middle and later years were ruled by the art of Beaumont and Fletcher. The earliest work of these famous partners began when the master dramatist was closing his labors and preparing to leave forever the London stage; their later work was done for the second generation of play-lovers, and, taken as a whole, it is the best possible commentary upon those latter days. Shakespeare had sought ever for the deep springs that underlie human action; he had dealt only with what is universal and fundamental in human life, and he had held his audiences by the sheer truth and power of his creations. It was his to command, to compel his hearers to follow, awed or enraptured, wherever he might lead. Ben Jonson was the first dramatist to perceive the signs of decay in the national life. He became a man with a purpose; his one effort was to reform. To him, vice, to be hated, needed but to be seen in its true light. He would show in their most revolting aspects all the evils that were threatening the nation's higher life, but he exaggerated his creations, he showed only the surface, and he failed to hold the audiences that had been trained by Shakespeare to feel rather than to reason. Beaumont and Fletcher learned from both of these masters; they learned from Jonson to present unusual types rather than characters true at every point to the fundamentals of human life; they learned from Shakespeare to appeal to the feelings rather than the reasoning powers. But they went far beyond their mas-

ters; they won their audiences by a banquet of mere sensuous delight and romantic beauty; with characters and scenes that are often not far from sensational. They strove only to please; they yielded at every point to the demands of the time. They had no theories, no message, no lesson; it was theirs to supply what the people cared for, no matter what it might be. The result was a phenomenal popularity which was not lessened, to say the least, by the fact that they were gentlemen by birth and accomplished scholars. Their own generation believed them to be artists as great as Shakespeare, if not greater. On the title-page of *Two Noble Kinsmen,* first published in 1634, the name of Fletcher is placed before that of Shakespeare. The two dramatists were favorites with the theaters of the Restoration; indeed during nearly a century they were reverenced as artists of the highest rank.

Both writers were from excellent families. Fletcher, the elder of the two, was born in 1579, the son of Richard Fletcher, who afterwards became successively Bishop of Bristol, of Worcester, and of London. Of the life of the dramatist, however, almost nothing is known. The life of Beaumont, who was the son of a prominent Leicestershire family, is almost equally obscure. We know that he was educated at Oxford and at the Inner Temple, that he was a prominent figure among the wits of the Mermaid Inn, and that he joined Fletcher in dramatic collaboration some time in 1608. Few details are known of this famous partnership. Aubrey relates that the two dramatists "lived together on the Bankside, not far from the playhouse, both bachelors, had the same clothes, cloak, etc., between them." The period of collaboration lasted, probably, not more than three or four years, during

which time they produced no less than ten plays. In 1611 Beaumont married and retired to country life, and five years later he died at the early age of thirty-one. Fletcher worked on for nine years more, producing a profusion of plays. He was brilliant and versatile; he turned off work almost without effort. The extant dramas in which he certainly had a hand number over fifty titles. His contemporary, Brome, has remarked upon his fluent ease:

> Of Fletcher and his works I speak.
> His works! says Momus, nay his plays you 'd say!
> Thou hast said right, for that to him was play
> Which was to others' brains a toil.

His charming personality, his gentleness, his wit, his learning, his gentle birth, his brilliancy, made him the delight of his age. His love of comradeship was strong; after the departure of Beaumont he collaborated freely with Massinger, Shirley, Rowley, and doubtless others. There are few plays that are known absolutely to be his alone, and, on the other hand, there are few dramas of the era in which he may not have had a hand. He died of the plague in 1625, and was buried in the Church of St. Saviour's, Southwark, in a grave that a few years later was opened to receive his old friend Massinger.

BY BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.
1608. Philaster.
1609–1610. The Maid's Tragedy.
1610–1611. The Knight of the Burning Pestle.
1612. Cupid's Revenge.
1616. Thierry and Theodoret.

BY FLETCHER.
1610. The Faithful Shepherdess.
1612. The Captain.
1613. The Honest Man's Fortune.
1616. Bonduca.
1624. The Bloody Brother.
Many Others.

No literary partnership ever produced work more uniform in texture than that of Beaumont and Fletcher. It is impossible to tell with certainty just what dramas they produced together, or to de-

tect in the collaborated plays what is Beaumont's and what Fletcher's. Contemporary criticism maintained that " Beaumont," as Lowell expresses it, " contributed the artistic judgment and Fletcher the fine frenzy," that Beaumont's part was to prune and subdue the exuberance and fancy of his more gifted companion. This on the whole seems highly reasonable, especially in the light shed by Fletcher's later plays, which are certainly more rich and gorgeous, more large and free than the earlier works, but which lack their sustained strength and artistic development. The trend of recent criticism seems to make more and more of Fletcher, and to cast Beaumont more and more into the background.

The strength of Beaumont and Fletcher, for it is almost impossible to separate them, lay in their spontaneous ease and their romantic grace. Dryden declared that they " reproduced the easy conversation of gentlefolks more ably than Shakespeare." There is a richness of setting, a gorgeousness of coloring, about their work that gives it an indefinable charm.

> In spite of all their coarseness [declares Lowell] there is a delicacy, a sensibility, an air of romance, and above all, a grace, in their best work that make them forever attractive to the young, and to all those who have learned to grow old amiably. Imagination, as Shakespeare teaches us to know it, we can hardly allow them, but they are the absolute lords of some of the fairest provinces in the domain of fancy. Their poetry is genuine, spontaneous, and at first hand.

They were strongest in comedy. " Nothing else in English," says Gosse, " is so like Shakespeare as a successful scene from a romantic comedy of Fletcher." There is, indeed, much in Fletcher's personality and art to remind us of Shakespeare. They seem to have at-

tracted each other. As far as we know, none but Marlowe and Fletcher was ever admitted into the workshop of the great master. The young dramatist served with him his apprenticeship, and he learned much of the secrets of his power, but his desire to please his age was fatal to art in its highest sense, and he failed to reach the highest place. His defects were not many, but they were fatal. He took impossible types or characters; light, airy creations, often beautiful and sensuous. He worked from without rather than from within. His women are always extremes; they go beyond nature in goodness and badness, and there is no middle ground. His plays, especially those of his later days, reek with indecency and filth.

They exaggerated [says Gosse] all the dangerous elements which he [Jonson] had held restrained; they proceeded, in fact, downwards towards the inevitable decadence, gay with all the dolphin colors of approaching death. . . . Yet no conception of English poetry is complete without reference to these beautiful, sensuous, incoherent plays. The Alexandrine genius of Beaumont and Fletcher was steeped through and through in beauty; and so quickly did they follow the fresh morning of Elizabethan poetry that their premature sunset was tinged with dewy and "fresh-quilted" hues of dawn. In the short span of their labors they seem to take hold of the entire field of the drama, from birth to death, and Fletcher's quarter of a century helps us to see how rapid and direct was the decline.—*Modern English Literature.*

2. John Webster (c. 1580–c. 1625)

Authorities. *Webster's Dramatic Works*, 4 vols. (Scribners); *Webster and Tourneur* (Mermaid Series); **Golden**, *Brief History of the English Drama*; **Lowell's** essay in *Old English Dramatists*, and **Swinburne's** essay in *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1886.

Of all the Elizabethan dramatists, Fletcher and Web-

ster alone may be compared with Shakespeare,—the one in comedy, the other in tragedy. Webster was the strongest of that somber little group of playwrights who during a vague period in the early years of the new reign wove tragedies from the darkest and most fearful materials in human experience. Of their personalities and life histories we know almost nothing. Tourneur, a wild genius, " infected by some rankling plague-spot of the soul," is a mere shadow that flits for a moment across the period. The two or three tragedies that bear his name are intense, lawless creations, abounding in melodrama, yet full of tragic grandeur. And Ford, who " delves with style of steel on plates of bronze his monumental scenes of spiritual anguish," although he came from a good family, is scarcely better known. Law was his profession; he doubtless had no practical experience with the stage; he wrote for recreation and not for money, and he did some things supremely well. In the opinion of Lamb he " was of the first order of poets. He sought for sublimity not by parcels in metaphors or visible images, but directly where she has her full residence in the heart of man, in the actions and sufferings of the greatest minds." But his lack of humor, his extravagance and impurity, were fatal defects.

Webster also is a mere name. He was " born free of the Merchant-Tailors' Company," he began to write for the stage about 1602, he collaborated freely, especially with Dekker, he made his will in 1625,—the rest is conjecture. Seven plays with his name upon the title-page have come down to us, but of these at least three are known to have been largely influenced by other hands.

To realize the full strength of the dramatist, to feel, in

the words of Swinburne, "the fierce and scornful intensity, the ardor of passionate and compressed contempt which distinguishes the savagely humorous satire of Webster," one must confine himself to his two great tragedies, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. These without question are the strongest tragedies in the language outside of Shakespeare. They contain characters that are like real men and women; they leave upon us the impression that we have seen a vivid section of human life and not a movement of artificial figures,—a statement that can be made in its fullness of no other dramatist of the period save the great master himself. We are continually reminded of Shakespeare,—little touches, allusions, turns of thought, coincidences, that cannot be charged as direct imitation but which are so near it as to be suggestive. Often he equals his master in his power of compressing a thought into few words.

> Though his fame [says Swinburne] assuredly does not depend upon the merit of a casual passage here and there, it would be easy to select from any of his representative plays such examples of the highest, the purest, the most perfect power, as can be found only in the works of the greatest among poets. There is not, as far as my studies have ever extended, a third English poet to whom these words might rationally be attributed by the conjecture of a competent reader:
>
> "We cease to grieve, cease to be fortune's slaves,
> Nay, cease to die, by dying."

Webster's greatest power lay in his command of terror. In the oft-quoted words of Lamb,

> To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit:

this only a Webster can do. Writers of an inferior genius may "upon horror's head horrors accumulate," but they cannot do this.

In Webster's two great tragedies

there is [says Lowell] almost something like a fascination of crime and horror. Our eyes dazzle with them. The imagination that conceived them is a ghastly imagination. Hell is naked before it. It is the imagination of nightmare, but of no vulgar nightmare. I would rather call it fantasy than imagination, for there is something fantastic in its creations and the fantastic is dangerously near to the grotesque.

It was this constant intensity, this striving after effect at any cost, that marks Webster as a decadent dramatist. He works always with extremes, he keeps his audience always at highest tension. His characters are alive; they are the result of careful design, and we may study them as we do real men and women: but they are abnormal characters. Crime is ever before us; it "is presented as a spectacle and not as a means of looking into our own hearts and fathoming our own consciousness." In Webster we find every sensation that abnormal life can give: there are dances of maniacs, death by crafty devices, terrific death-scenes, ghastly tortures, ghosts with skulls, strangled infants, madness, murder, crime,—always crime, in its most "creepy" and insidious forms. This was a decadent note. To dwell upon deformity and upon exceptions to the great laws of life and society is not true art; it is but a step from this to vulgar sensationalism.

Webster had not Shakespeare's constructive power; he lacked a practical knowledge of stage-craft. His *Appius and Virginia* is well designed, but the other dramas are sketchy, incoherent, even chaotic. It is, as Gosse has remarked, as if the dramatist had furnished a series of

powerful scenes for a collaborator to round out and complete. His dramas do not succeed upon the stage; they are best read in extracts. Had a contemporary selected the best passages and scenes of Webster, and had these come down to us as the mutilated remains of a great dramatist, we doubtless to-day would rank him by the side of Shakespeare himself.

REQUIRED READING. *The Duchess of Malfi* (Thayer), and *The White Devil*, Temple Dramatists or Mermaid Series.

3. Philip Massinger (1583–1640)

Authorities. Massinger's Dramatic Works, edited by **Gifford,** also by **Cunningham,** also by **Symonds** in Mermaid Series; **Golden,** *Brief History of the English Drama;* **Stephen,** *Hours in a Library;* **Lowell,** *Old English Dramatists;* and **Gosse,** *Jacobean Poets.*

"Massinger," says Gosse, "is really, though not technically and literally, the last of the great men. In him we have all the characteristics of the school in their final decay, before they dissolved and were dispersed." Born just at the opening of the dramatic period, he belongs distinctly to the later group of playwrights who worked from models rather than from nature. A little of his personal history is known. He was born and reared in the household of the Duchess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister, where his father was a trusted servant; he was for a time at Oxford, but he drifted early to London, where he becomes indistinct in the mist that closes about all the dramatists of the era. A few hints there are that he lived a life of poverty, and that for years he was driven to do hack work for the theaters and to collaborate with more

successful playwrights. There is evidence that he worked much with Dekker, who is so rarely found save in solution with others, with Fletcher, Middleton, Rowley, and Field. He is known to have produced no less than thirty-seven plays, half of which have perished. His best dramas are his tragedy, *The Duke of Milan*, and his comedy, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, which, on account of the striking and picturesque character of Sir Giles Overreach, still holds the stage.

Massinger's strength as a dramatist lay in his powers of construction, his skill with stage-craft, his subdued and pleasing pictures of contemporary life and manners. He was almost wholly without spontaneous creative power; he had little humor; he never touched the deeper passions; he seldom created characters that are not of the stage stagey.

> He never [says Lamb] shakes or disturbs the mind with grief. He is read with composure and placid delight. He wrote with that equability of all the passions which made his English style the purest and most free from violent metaphors and harsh constructions of any of the dramatists who were his contemporaries.

Everywhere in Massinger's work—and the statement is equally true of Shirley and of all the later dramatists—there are signs of decaying vitality. Sentiment has taken the place of passion; rhetorical finish has supplanted the fine frenzy of the early days. There is an increased elaboration, a growing tendency toward complexity and detail, a striving after the novel and unusual. Picturesque types and extreme situations, first used by Jonson, have taken the place of studies from life and nature. The era was fast declining. Fletcher and Webster and Tourneur were the blazing and shifting colors of the sun-

set; Massinger and Shirley were the fading afterglow that quickly died into leaden hues and utter darkness.

Thus closed the great dramatic era. It stands sharply defined and singularly complete. It was a brief period; Shakespeare and Marlowe might have lived to see its entire extent. It produced all at once a marvelous group of artists: all of the real masters of the era received their inspiration during a single decade. The decline began when the ranks of this earlier school began to thin; the recruits from the second generation of dramatists were all inferior men. It was a period of romanticism: it was impossible to make headway with classic forms after the great dramas of Shakespeare. He was the Jupiter who drew all minor bodies into his vast orbit. The ponderous Jonson might resist but he could not overcome the noiseless force that drew all men to his great contemporary. It was, despite its brevity, a well-rounded era, passing through every phase of growth and decline. And it ended in a decay that was the result of inevitable laws; that arose from the decline in the national life, from the subsidence of that joyous and spontaneous spirit that had first made the era possible.

Required Reading. *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (Bell's English Classics).

TABLE IX.—THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

I. PERIOD OF TRANSITION. 1561–1593. From *Gorboduc* to the death of Marlowe.	A gradual blending of the old native drama with the classic comedy and tragedy to produce the new romantic type. The work of Marlowe marks transition to the next period.	JOHN LYLY, 1553–1606. Robert Greene, 1560–1592. George Peele, 1550?–1598? Thomas Nash, 1567–1600? Thomas Lodge, 1558?–1625. CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, 1564–1593.
II. PERIOD OF CULMINATION. 1593–1616. To the death of Shakespeare.	Spontaneous creative power. Work done from nature and not from models. Scenes and characters true to the great fundamentals of human life. Artlessness and simplicity. Jonson marks beginning of decline.	WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 1564–1616. *Thomas Dekker*, *c.* 1570–1637. GEORGE CHAPMAN, 1559?–1634. THOMAS HEYWOOD, 1581?–1640? *John Marston*, 1575?–1634. BEN JONSON, 1573–1637.
III. PERIOD OF DECADENCE. 1616–1637. To the death of Jonson.	Art learned by careful study of models. Increasing elaboration of plot; characters picturesque types, marked exceptions; scenes unusual, sensational, extreme; a constant striving after novelty and all that is unusual; diction rhetorical and finished, rather than spontaneous.	Francis Beaumont, 1584–1616. JOHN FLETCHER, 1579–1625. JOHN WEBSTER, 1580?–1625? CYRIL TOURNEUR, ——?——? *John Ford*, 1586–1640? *Thomas Middleton*, 1570–1627. *Philip Massinger*, 1583–1640. James Shirley, 1596–1666.
IV. PERIOD OF QUICK DECLINE. 1637–1642. To the closing of the theaters.	Increasing sensationalism; striving after effects; immoral scenes and suggestions. Not until after the Restoration did the drama reach its lowest level of degradation.	John Crowne, ——?——? Sir William Davenant, 1606–1668. Richard Brome, ——?——? Sir John Suckling, 1609–1641.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TRIUMPH OF PROSE

THE homely, yet strong and picturesque, writings of men like Tyndale and Latimer are in the history of English prose what the creations of Langland and the ballad-makers are in English poetry. They were vigorous, unschooled, spontaneous outpourings. The Renaissance touched this native prose, but it did not greatly change its form or its spirit. Sir John Cheke, the master mind of the Cambridge scholars, maintained that "our tongue should be written clean and pure, unmixed and unmingled with borrowings of other tongues," and his influence and that of his followers kept the old vernacular prose in something like its native simplicity. But classic influence was inevitable. Later scholars like Ascham were influenced all unconsciously by their knowledge of Greek and Latin; their work was often permeated by the classic spirit; it followed often in curious windings the classic order, and there are traces even of classic idioms. English prose very gradually was beginning to assume two forms, the scholarly and the popular, yet it is needless to attempt to draw the line between them. The scholarly writers made no attempt to evolve a new prose style; their imitation of the classics had been all unconscious; it had come spontaneously and was as free from artificiality and from deliberate self-criticism as were even Latimer's unclassic sermons. All prose before Lyly, and indeed much that came after his time, belongs

to the first period, the period of writers who were entirely occupied with their message and who gave not a thought to the manner of presenting it. The prose of this earliest period has already been considered. It is singularly rich and voluminous, and it contains some of the strongest and most idiomatic creations in the language.

1552. The Book of Common Prayer.
1558. Knox's First Blast of the Trumpet.
1563. Foxe's Book of Martyrs.
1577. Holinshed's Chronicle.
1579. North's Plutarch.
1581. Sidney's Apology for Poesy.
1582. Hakluyt's Divers Voyages.
1589. Puttenham's Art of Poesie.
1591. Raleigh's Fight about the Azores.

With Lyly begins the second period of English prose, the period of experiment, of uncertainty, of transition. All in a moment, with a single book, English prose leaped from the extreme of simplicity to the extreme of elaboration. *Euphues* was a mere vagary, but it marks the opening of an epoch. The vogue of Euphuism was short, but not so the vogue of prose that depended upon some peculiarity of style. For a decade style was everything; readers read books not for what was said but for how it was said. A time of reaction was inevitable; sooner or later a master must appear to gather up the strongest elements of both schools and unite them in a new and superior type of prose.

This master proved to be Richard Hooker. With no thought of producing a new literary form, with no thought of anything save the message that burned within him, he produced a prose that was as impassioned and spontaneous as Latimer's and as finished and artificial as Lyly's. He stands as a transition figure; he by no means spoke the final word concerning English prose; it remained for later masters to form the perfect blend between the styles of

Latimer and Lyly, yet it was Hooker who first discovered the secret of strong and artistic prose, a literary form that was to dominate the next era in English literature.

1. Richard Hooker (1553–1600)

Authorities. **Walton's** charming work, though written in 1665, is still the standard biography of Hooker (Temple Classics). **Keble's** *Hooker's Complete Works* was long the standard edition, but it is now superseded by **Church's** edition. See also **Church,** *Ecclesiastical Polity,* Book i. (Clarendon Press), and **Whipple's** essay in *Literature of the Age of Elizabeth.*

The life of Hooker leads us away from the glitter and excitement of the court and theater, where almost all the literature of the period is to be found, into the quiet seclusion of the scholastic hall and the country parsonage. Compared with the wild careers of the University Wits, and of many of the poets and dramatists, his life was well-nigh colorless. The son of poor parents, "better qualified to rejoice in his early piety than to appreciate his early intelligence," he had the great good fortune of falling into the hands of an appreciative schoolmaster, who, after teaching him what he was able, succeeded in imparting his enthusiasm in the lad to Bishop Jewell. The young genius was thereupon rescued from the trade apprenticeship to which his parents would have bound him, and sent at the early age of fourteen to Oxford, where as student, fellow, and lecturer he passed the next fifteen years. His after-life was eventless. He was for seven years Master of the Temple, but he preferred the retirement of country parishes, and his last days were spent in comparative seclusion. He was first of all a student.

Slight and feeble of body, retiring and sensitive in disposition, he was ill-equipped for the rough hand-to-hand contest with the world. It was only when in his study, pen in hand, surrounded by his books, that he was perfectly in his element. It was from this secluded nook, himself unseen, that he sent forth his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, a work to which he gave his entire life, and a work which even now ranks as the best exposition and defense of the English Church.

The subject-matter of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* need not long detain us. The work grew from the fierce religious controversy that raged with ever-increasing violence during the whole period. It was an age, as Hooker declared, " full of tongue and weak of brain." Theological discussion that was wild and windy filled the period full of pamphlets and sermons. The Church of England stood in the thick of the battle; it was regarded by many as almost an accident, an unconsidered creation called into being by the whim of Henry VIII. It was bitterly assailed by Catholic, Puritan, and Calvinist. Hooker attempted to defend it, to justify its laws, to prove it the best possible compromise between widely differing elements. But in attempting to do this he did far more. As Crofts has so well expressed it:

> Hooker's work is not only important in the history of the English Church and as marking an epoch in the Puritan controversy; it is important in the highest degree in the history of English thought. Hooker did in the sphere of moral and social knowledge what Bacon did in the sphere of natural science. Bacon gave to the students and observers of nature the idea of law, —of law which was not the creation of the intellectual imagination, but whose actual existence was to be discovered by the careful and patient examination of phenomena. Bacon was the first in the modern world to establish scientifically the idea that there was an invariable sequence in the

phenomena of nature; that there was order in the world of nature. Hooker's work first suggested that there was order in the moral world; that man has neither absolute power over his life nor is the servant of an omnipotent and capricious will; but is always unconsciously governed by law. "He laid down," says Mr. Church, "the theory of a rule derived not from one alone, but from all sources of light and truth with which man finds himself encompassed." In his work lay the germs of what has since developed into moral and political science.—*English Literature.*

The style of Hooker is at once impassioned and finished. "Matter and manner are wedded as in few other books of the same kind," and indeed as in no other books before the age of Dryden. He does not depend upon occasional flashes of eloquence; he is singularly sustained and constant. His round, full periods follow each other like the vast unbreaking waves in mid-ocean. He draws upon the full resources of the language, and sometimes he goes beyond it. Like More and Ascham, he follows often the Latin order and presses into service Latinized terms and expressions. At times his elaborate and sonorous diction overleaps itself and becomes dangerously near to mere fustian, but this by no means condemns the author. The partition between sublimity and bombast, as we learned from Marlowe, is indeed a thin one. He was an innovator; he worked without models; and the wonder is that he accomplished results of such uniform excellence and power. Hallam's criticism, while to some it may seem extreme, has been generally indorsed:

So stately and graceful is the march of his periods, so various the fall of his musical cadences upon the ear, so rich in images, so condensed in sentences, so grave and noble his diction, so little is there of vulgarity in his racy idiom, of pedantry in his learned phrases, that I know not whether any later writer has more admirably displayed the capacities of our lan-

guage, or produced passages more worthy of comparison with the splendid monuments of antiquity.

REQUIRED READING. *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book i. (Clarendon Press).

2. *Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans (1561–1626)*

Authorities. **Spedding,** *Francis Bacon and His Times*, a scholarly and authoritative work, presents Bacon in the best possible light; **Macaulay's** *Essay* is brilliant and merciless; **Church's** *Life*, in English Men of Letters Series, is conservative and accurate,—the best short study of Bacon. Among the great mass of other authorities the most helpful are **Abbot,** *Life and Work of Bacon;* **Nichol,** *Francis Bacon, His Life and Philosophy;* **Reynold,** *Bacon's Essays;* **Arber,** *A Harmony of the Essays*, and **Ellis,** *Bacon's Complete Works*, Riverside Edition. For bibliography of authorities, see **Welsh,** *English Masterpiece Course*, and **Clark,** *English Prose Writers.*

When we reach Francis Bacon we catch our first glimpse of the modern world. The Elizabethans with their fine frenzy, their gorgeous dreams, their delight in the present hour, were creatures of the Renaissance. They were intoxicated with the promise and the joy of life, its sensuous delights, its awful mysteries, its swift movement, its wild uncertainty. They wrote for the present moment, intensely, artlessly; and never dreamed of literary laws, of criticism, of analysis, of posterity. Into this careless, inspired Renaissance age Francis Bacon came as a breath from a new world. He brought with him the idea of science in its modern sense, an idea which is the very opposite of poetry and romance. With him began, in Emerson's phrase, "the influx of decomposition and prose." With him began the modern age of analysis,

of cause and effect, of criticism,—of science. The great creative age had reached its full; poetry in its primitive, spontaneous, youthful beauty must henceforth fade more and more, for, says Emerson again, "Whoever discredits analogy and requires heaps of facts before any theories can be attempted has no poetic power, and nothing original or beautiful will be produced by him."

But despite the work that separates him from his contemporaries Bacon was still peculiarly a child of his age. He touched it at a thousand points. His father was for twenty years Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of Elizabeth, and the childhood and youth of Bacon were passed in the very heart of the royal court. He was reared among courtiers and favorites in an atmosphere heavy with fulsome flattery, with intrigue and corruption. His moral sense became blunted, while his naturally powerful intellect became sharpened and strengthened. He went to Cambridge, where he soon detected the weakness of the prevailing educational methods; he went to Paris, where he studied a new phase of worldliness; he returned to England and plunged into a study of the law as the surest profession for winning political preferment, which in his mind was the only desirable means of worldly advancement.

Bacon's Political Career, its struggles and its triumphs, its weakness and its mistakes, we need not follow. It is a sad story and it points an obvious moral. The man was a strange mixture of things good and evil, one wholly impossible in any other age and environment than that in which he flourished. He had the daring, the power, the lofty idealism of the Elizabethans, but to it was joined the fawning meanness, the venality, the petty

place-seeking ideals of the Jacobean court. He seems like two men in one; he lived two lives separated from one another by a whole world. In one he rises into the clouds; he would bring to the world for all time a new method of arriving at truth. He writes like a pure-hearted, broad-souled man; his essays contain all of the rudiments of practical ethics: and yet, because he feared to lose favor with the sovereign, he who could write so sweetly of Friendship, hastened his dearest friend to death; and he who wrote, as if inspired, counsels to those in great place, condemning with eloquence bribery and corruption, confessed in abject and fawning humility that he himself as Lord Chancellor had received countless bribes without a thought of protest. The man who could rise to the heights of the *Novum Organum* could also bathe in the mire of the most corrupt of all royal courts.

His Philosophy. It was the dream of Bacon's life from the days of his early manhood to establish himself with posterity as a philosopher and a benefactor of the human race. He was the first of Elizabethans, perhaps the first of Englishmen, to look away from his own day to an immortality in the generations unborn. His one thought was for permanency. He would be "a cosmopolitan philosopher writing for all ages and all nations," and he would also win the best prizes of his own day. He would "take all knowledge for his province," and he would also be Lord Chancellor of England. He believed that he had discovered a new instrument, a "novum organum," by the use of which vast unexplored areas of truth would be opened up. His *Novum Organum* was to be a thesaurus of things which, in his own words, had "never yet entered the thoughts of any mortal man"; it was to revo-

lutionize the whole realm of thought. Such were his dreams, wild enough in the Elizabethan times, but commonplace enough to-day. For this "novum organum" was the inductive method which is the very foundation of modern science.

Before Bacon's day all knowledge had been based upon authority. The investigator after truth must delve in the learned dust of the libraries; he must consult the schoolmen from Aristotle down. The scholastic system had been modified since the days of Duns Scotus, but it still ruled the universities. Bacon insisted that nature is the supreme authority; that she "is commanded by obeying her," that "the mind must follow nature, not anticipate her; it must be passive and receptive rather than active and speculative." The investigator after truth must gather facts in abundance; he must note exceptions and variations; he must tabulate and retabulate his results, and by a series of exclusions and coincidences arrive at the ultimate law. But Bacon, after explaining the workings of his new instrument, left others to test and perfect it. He made few experiments; he arrived at few conclusions.

The great and wonderful work which the world owes to him [says Church] was in the idea and not in the execution. The idea was that the systematic and wide examination of facts was the first thing to be done in science, and until this had been done faithfully and impartially, with all the appliances and all the safeguards that experience and forethought could suggest, all generalizations, all anticipations from mere reasoning, must be adjourned and postponed; and further, that, sought on these conditions, knowledge, certain and fruitful, beyond all that men then imagined, could be attained. His was the faith of the discoverer, the imagination of the poet, the voice of the prophet. But his was not the warrior's arm, the engineer's skill, the architect's creativeness. "I only sound the clarion," he says, "but I enter not into the battle."

But there were plenty of men who would enter the battle. Modern science was awakening all about him. Honest, unprejudiced investigators, who could grapple closely with the phenomena of nature, were for the first time in human history beginning to appear. The age of geographical discovery was to be succeeded by the age of scientific discovery. The realm of nature was beginning to be seen for the first time in its true light, and it was Bacon who furnished the instrument that made all clear. "He moved," says Macaulay, "the intellects which have moved the world."

Gilbert, 1539-1583.
Tycho Brahe, 1546-1601.
Napier, 1550-1617.
Galileo, 1564-1642.
Kepler, 1571-1613.
Harvey, 1578-1657.
Boyle, 1626-1691.
Huygens, 1629-1695.
Locke, 1632-1704.
Newton, 1642-1727.

The Writings of Bacon. The controlling motive of Bacon's life was to develop and explain his philosophy. The greater part of his writings are, therefore, philosophical and technical rather than literary. Moreover, in his zeal to work for all ages and all people he used the Latin tongue, "the universal language," which in his estimation was to "last as long as bookes last." He looked with distrust upon the strong old English tongue. "These modern languages," he declared, "will at one time or another play the bank-rowte with books." He would take no risk with his precious message to posterity, and he was uneasy until all of his books, even his *Essays*, had been turned into the trusty Latin. As a result his purely literary accomplishment in his native tongue was not large; yet, small as it is, it is of enormous value. For the prose of Bacon in its extreme conciseness and vigor, its clearness and proportion, its eloquence and rich imagery, is unsurpassed by any other English prose of his age. Bacon wrote with extreme care; he hoarded

his thoughts and polished them again and again. His notebooks which still exist bear testimony to his habit of economy of ideas and words. He toiled over his page like a Macaulay. "After my manner," he declares, "I alter ever when I add. So that nothing is finished till all be finished." His *Essays*, the first ten of which appeared in 1597, is beyond doubt his best known and most deserving book. It is "a work," says Green, "remarkable not merely for the condensation of its thought and its felicity and exactness of expression, but for the power with which it applied to human life that experimental analysis which Bacon was at a later time to make the key to Science." The same accuracy and compression of thought, the same breadth of view and fullness of experience, appear in *The Advancement of Learning*, which is a general introduction to his great philosophic work; in his *Henry VII.*, which was the first philosophic history ever written in English, and his *New Atlantis*, which was the Jacobean *Utopia*. A comparison of the dream of More with that of Bacon is extremely suggestive. More would renovate England, he would make an ideal island from existing elements; Bacon would commence anew and build a government founded upon his *Novum Organum*. *The New Atlantis* is the nineteenth century as Bacon dreamed of it. The difference between the Renaissance and the modern scientific spirit cannot be better illustrated than by a comparison of these old dreams.

Essays, 1597, 1612, 1625.
Advancement of Learning, 1605.
History of Henry VII., 1622.
The New Atlantis, 1627.

Bacon's Essays. It would doubtless amaze Bacon, were he to visit the present century, to find the verdict which time has rendered upon his writings. His ponderous

Novum Organum, which was too precious to trust to the English language, is often mentioned by students, but not a dozen men now living have ever read it; the dust of centuries has gathered upon the few editions that the years have demanded, but the essays, the homely, unbookish diversions of its author's idle moments, have gained in popularity and influence with every year.

The word "essay" was borrowed from Montaigne. It meant in Bacon's mind a first attempt, a preliminary study, a rough jotting down of notes, or, as he himself phrases it, of "dispersed meditations." The first ten essays of 1597 were indeed but jottings from a notebook, but as the author proceeded he gained more and more in form and arrangement until at length he had evolved the essay in the modern sense of the term,—the short, concise, perfectly rounded study of some single phase of human thought or human interest. In Bacon's mind the essay must come near to the homely, familiar things of common life; it must "come home to men's businesses and bosoms."

Descending from his "specular mount" [says Storr] the philosopher of the *Novum Organum* strolls with us to the market-place, conducts us over his great house and stately gardens, lets us peep into his study, and points out his favorite authors, entertains us with reminiscences of court and council chambers, and unfolds the secrets of statecraft and the windings and doubles of diplomatists and placemen; he gives us hints on travel, hints on bargaining, hints on physicking ourselves; he advises us (though his advice on those deeper matters is superficial and commonplace) about marriage and education of children, the religious conduct of life, and the fear of facing death. Yet it may be noted in passing that, in spite of the familiarity of manner and the practical common-sense of the essays, their range in one direction is very limited, and they deal only with a small fraction of humanity. Throughout, life is regarded from the standing point of the author—of the courtier, the high official, the man of

wealth and position—and the conduct and feelings of the masses are considered only as they affect him.

The style of Bacon differs widely from that of Hooker. The long majestic periods of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* are the work of a man who is carried to the height of eloquence by the very force of his passion. Bacon worked deliberately; he saw clearly and deeply and he would have his reader see clearly also. A constant seeking for effectiveness led to a constant self-criticism which is at the very basis of style in the modern sense. Without striving for style he became unconsciously a stylist. As we read him we feel at once that we are in contact with an intellect of marvelous keenness and power; with one who had a message, but who sought by every possible means to make that message most effective. He preserved the pungent, native flavor of the old English prose, but he united to it the careful art of Lyly and the broad facility of the classic writers.

Such, then, was Francis Bacon, a vast and half-uncertain figure standing on the border between the ancient and the modern worlds. He was a true Elizabethan. He had all the daring and idealism and splendid creative ability of his most marvelous generation. He who at thirty-one could announce that he had taken all knowledge for his province was a true son of the "spacious age," the age that could inspire Spenser to begin the mighty task of *The Faerie Queene*, and that could lead Milton to essay "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." But Bacon was the first of the Elizabethans to turn to the material world. Spenser had been kindled by the heroic past to sing of an ideal society where chivalrous morality should rule; Shakespeare had shed the fierce

light of his genius upon the workings of the human heart in an immortal present; Milton was to cast his eyes into the world beyond this life. All of them dealt with the immaterial side of the universe; Bacon turned the Elizabethan inspiration upon the physical and the material. He had caught a single glimpse of the centuries to come, and he told the secret that was to make possible modern science. Yet Bacon is by no means to be reckoned among the moderns; he was by no means a scientist; he could not, like a Newton or a Darwin, grapple closely with the phenomena of nature. He was an Elizabethan, inspired and artless; a prophet and a seer; a pure idealist as much as was Shakespeare or Milton. He was, as he has declared himself, the bell that called others into the sanctuary but he himself entered not.

REQUIRED READING. *Bacon's Essays.* The most satisfactory and accessible edition of *The Advancement of Learning* is Cook's, and of *Henry VIII.* is Lumby's (Pitt Press Series).

3. The King James Version.

Authorities. **Scrivener,** *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible, 1611;* **Eadie,** *The English Bible;* **Moulton,** *The History of the English Bible;* **Westcott,** *A General View of the History of the English Bible;* **Cook,** *The Bible and English Prose Style.*

The crowning work of the Elizabethan period was unquestionably the King James Version of the Scriptures. Its appearance marks the end of the age of foundations and the beginning of the modern era. Before it there had been no generally accepted standard of measure for diction and style; the language had become strong and

rich and wonderfully flexible, but it was yet as wax in the hands of every original writer. It needed to be embodied in some supreme, universally accepted masterpiece before it could become fixed and inviolable. Shakespeare had done this in a degree, but his dramas, popular as they were with contemporary playgoers, were for a century almost unread. It was the English Bible, read by all classes and by every fireside, that gave the final form both to the English language and to English literature.

The formation of this supreme masterpiece was not the work of any one man or of any one body of men; it was the result of a century of earnest laborers. The era of Bible translation began in reality with Tyndale. From the days when his strong and marvelously simple versions of the Gospels began to circulate in England down to the days of King James hardly a decade went by without its translation of the Scriptures. It was during this century that England became, in the words of Green, "the people of a book." Every version had its own peculiarities and merits, and every one was to some degree an advance upon its predecessors, but all versions were true in the main to the great model first struck out by Tyndale. "He it was," says Dr. Eadie, "who gave us the first great outline, distinctly and wonderfully etched." Working wholly "without forensample," as he expressed it, for he did not consult Wyclif's translation, Tyndale made a wholly original version, clothed in the strong, homely idioms of the common people,—a version which is to the King

1380. Wyclif's Version.
1388. Purvey's Revision.
1525–1536. Tyndale's New Testament.
1530. Tyndale's Pentateuch.
1535. Coverdale's Bible.
1537. Matthew's Bible.
1539. Taverner's Bible.
1539. The Great Bible.
1557. Whittingham's New Testament.
1560. The Geneva Bible.

James Bible what the Anglo-Saxon tongue is to modern English. The whole century of translation was only a gradual enriching, a softening and harmonizing, of this first great outline.

1568. The Bishops' Bible.
1582. The Rheims New Testament.
1609–1610. The Douay Old Testament.
1611. The King James Version.
1881–1885. The Revised Version.

To follow the gradual evolution of the English Bible from Tyndale's first sketch is a fascinating study. No field of literary history is more full of stirring incident, of noble self-sacrifice, of heroic devotion to lofty ideals, and of grander results, but it does not fall within the limits of our plan. During the era of Elizabeth the two versions commonly in use in England were the Bishops' Bible and the Geneva Bible, the one supported by Church and Parliament and the other used widely by the common people, especially the Puritans. Under such conditions jealousy and discontent were natural and inevitable. Both churchmen and Puritans were anxious for a change, and accordingly at the great conference called by the King at the opening of his reign to hear and determine "things pretended to be amiss in the Church," it is not strange that a request should have been made for an authorized and standard version of the Scriptures. The request found favor with James, who had ideas of his own upon theological matters, and he at once chose fifty-four of his leading scholars and divines to prepare the new version.

Every means possible was taken to secure a perfect translation. By the rules laid down by the King, the translators were to be divided into companies, and it was required of "every particular man of each company to take the same chapter or chapters, and having translated or emended them severally by himself, where he thinks

good, all to meet together to confer what they have done and agree for their part what shall stand." The work thereupon was to be sent to all of the other companies, who were to examine it "seriously and judiciously, for his Majesty is very careful on this point." They were to follow the Bishops' Bible, which was to be "as little altered as the original will permit," but the King added as his last rule: "These translations to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishops' Bible—Tyndale's, Coverdale's, Matthew's, Whitchurch's, Geneva."

The King James Version was, therefore, a revision rather than a translation. It was the result of a careful collation of all previous translations compared with the originals, and as a result it contains the strongest elements of all previous versions. It is singularly free from the personality of its translators. Working as they did in companies and allowing no word or phrase to pass until by general consent it had been declared the best possible rendering, and drawing constantly, as they were required to do, the best words and phrases from previous translations, it is not strange that their work should have had a strength, a smoothness, a consistency, and an absence of all marks of personal peculiarity that no single translator could ever have reached. The work was done at precisely the right time. The Elizabethan period was at its height; the air was electric with creative energy; all the elements of style and diction had been evolved; the language had become rich and full and wholly adequate,—everything was ready. A half-century later the task would have been impossible; the "age of prose and reason" would have produced a literary Bible which

would have been a failure. The rules of James which held the translators rigidly to the old Saxon outline made the version a popular book, and the scholarly and literary atmosphere through which it passed in translation made it acceptable to scholars and churchmen. It was the final triumph of the old native tongue. The school of Langland and Tyndale and Latimer was henceforth to rule English literature.

The strength and beauty of the King James Version have been recognized by every English master for three centuries. It is " the greatest prose triumph of the time," says Brooke; it is " probably the greatest prose work in any language," declares Saintsbury. Its influence is traceable in every masterpiece in later English literature. The makers of the Revised Version testify to its beauty and power: " We have had to study this great Version carefully and minutely, line by line; and the longer we have been engaged upon it the more we have learned to admire its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression, its general accuracy, and, we must not fail to add, the music of its cadences, and the felicity of its rhythm."

Nor has its influence been confined to literary fields. From the study of its pages there came to Englishmen a new conception of human life and of individual liberty, and a new outlook upon religious and social problems. The Puritan Revolution had its roots in this one book, and the whole spirit of the succeeding age which made England what she now is came largely from its pages. It stimulated mental activity; it awoke the lower classes, upon whom there still hung the drowsiness of the Middle Ages. " Legend and annal," says Green, " war-song

and psalm, State-roll and biography, the mighty voices of prophets, the parables of Evangelists, stories of mission journeys, of perils by the sea and among the heathen, philosophic arguments, apocalyptic visions, all were flung broadcast over minds unoccupied for the most part by any rival learning." It educated England as no other country has ever been educated, and its influence has increased with every year.

Consider [says Huxley], that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple from John-o'-Groat's house to Land's End as Dante and Tasso once were to the Italians; that it is written in the noblest and purest English and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past stretching back to the farthest limits of the oldest nations in the world.

With the Bible in its final form the period of foundations may be said to have closed in England. Henceforth there was to be the rearing of a noble superstructure, but it was to be upon a broad and unchangeable base.

Required Reading. No one can attain to a strong and idiomatic prose style or be able to appreciate fully the masterpieces of English literature without a constant study of the English Bible.

TABLE X.—THE ELIZABETHAN AGE, 1557–1625

English Literature.	English History	Foreign Literature and Events.
I.—Poetry.	1585. Raleigh's Virginia Colony.	1544–1595. Tasso.
Sir Philip Sidney, 1554–1586.	1587. Execution of Mary.	1564–1642. Galileo.
Edmund Spenser, 1552–1599.	1588. The Spanish Armada.	1572. St. Bartholomew.
The Sonneteers, 1592–1596.	1595. Tyrone's Rebellion.	1580. Montaigne's *Essays*.
Samuel Daniel, 1562–1619.	1603. Accession of James I.	1584. Death of William of Orange.
Michael Drayton, 1563–1631.	1604. Hampton Court Conference.	1596–1650. Descartes, French Philosopher.
John Donne, 1573–1621.	1605. Gunpowder Plot.	1598. Edict of Nantes.
II.—The Elizabethan Novel.	1607. Virginia Settled.	1600–1681. Calderon, Spanish Dramatist.
John Lyly, 1553–1606.	1620. The Puritans Settle New England.	1605. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.
Robert Greene, 1560–1592.	1621. Impeachment of Bacon.	1606–1684. Corneille, French Dramatist.
Sir Philip Sidney, 1554–1586.	1625. Charles I.	1618. Thirty Years' War Opens.
Thomas Nash, 1567–1600.		1621–1695. La Fontaine, French Fabulist.
III.—Later Prose.		1622–1673. Molière, French Dramatist.
Richard Hooker, 1553–1600.		1623–1662. Pascal, French Philosopher.
Francis Bacon, 1561–1626.		
King James Bible, 1611.		
IV.—The Drama.		
See Table IX.		

CHAPTER XXV

THE AGE OF MILTON

1625–1660

IN just what year or what decade the great creative period came to an end it is impossible to say. It certainly did not close with the reign of Elizabeth. The Queen undoubtedly heard its most rapturous and inspired notes, but many of its greatest productions came forth during the reign of her successor, and its echoes died not wholly away until the days of the Commonwealth. But while it is impossible to fix precise limits, just as it is impossible to tell the day or the week when spring closes and summer begins, it is nevertheless certain that some time during the last years of King James and the early years of Charles I. the period came to an end. The inspired group of poets and dramatists and prose writers who began their work during the last decade of Elizabeth left behind them no successors. As one by one these true Elizabethans ceased to sing, the chorus died away. Singers there were in abundance, writers and poets in every style and key, but they had lost the rapture, the inspiration, and the daring of the earlier creators.

THE STUARTS.
James I., 1603–1625.
Charles I., 1625–1649.
The Commonwealth.
Charles II., 1660–1685.
James II., 1685–1688.
William and Mary, 1688–1702.
Anne, 1702–1714.

It had been a marvelous epoch. When it opened, the native books of England might have been gathered upon

a single shelf. Imitation and experiment had set its stamp upon every volume; not one could have been chosen as a safe model for future writers. But in a scant half-century all was changed. England now had a native literature which in volume and strength and originality was not inferior to the best literatures of the world. It had produced works which have served even to our own day as the supreme models for literary production; it had laid completely the foundations upon which all later English writers have built and upon which all future writers must continue to build. All the centuries from Cædmon to Chaucer and Spenser had been but a gradual preparation for this epoch.

It was a brief period. It had originated in the enthusiasm and patriotism and hope of a great people united in a moment of crisis about an idealized leader. It had been the English phase of the Italian Renaissance. The leaders of the nation's thought had awakened for a moment to the meaning of a larger life; they had caught a glimpse of a new world, and it thrilled them and inspired them. But the direction of this English Renaissance had been sensuous and uncontrolled. Mere beauty, the ecstasy of the present hour, the artless voicing of the moment's joy or woe, this became the literature of the time. It was an era of intensity and passion, an era that cared nothing for posterity, and by its very carelessness made itself immortal. The movement had been largely aristocratic; its center had to a large degree been the court and the sovereign, and all of its leading literary products had been first presented with magnificent accompaniments and with royal acclamation.

It was this very element of aristocracy and exclusive-

ness that made the period so brief. Beneath the gay surface that flashed and glittered was the great mass of the English people whom the Elizabethan creators almost to a man had distrusted and despised. The Renaissance and the Reformation had come to them slowly, as all great ideas have come to the mass of English minds. They had come largely from the Bible, which a century of translation had spread over England. While Hellenism, brought in by the Renaissance, was molding the court and the aristocracy generally, Hebraism, the result of the Reformation, with its simple yet sublime ideals, and its appeal to the conscience and the individual, was doing its work among the people. The old spark of Lollardy, that had never wholly died in England, had been fanned into new life; slowly it had permeated the mass of the English people, until it was ready to sweep over England with resistless fury. A century of the open Bible had taught the common people the meaning of personal liberty. The divinity that had hedged about the Tudors had been turned by James I. and Charles I. into contempt. There was to be no more divine right of kings; the sovereign was but the servant of the people. Never before in England had there been such an awakening. The slow-moving masses that had bowed meekly under the absolute tyranny of Henry VIII., that had allowed Elizabeth to work her will and then had given way to universal grief at her death, within less than half a century were crushing the royal arms, shouting over the beheaded king, driving the crown prince, terrified, into exile in foreign lands, and placing the royal powers of the Tudors in the hands of a mere country squire in whose veins there flowed not a drop of royal blood.

It was indeed a fierce and stormy era that followed the age of Elizabeth, but it was bound to come sooner or later. Before modern England was possible there must be settled the great religious problem that had kept the island continually upon the verge of a crisis since the days of Wyclif. The Reformation in England had been incomplete. The rulers and the leaders had settled it, but not the slow-moving masses who are the real masters of England, and it required nothing less than civil war and a temporary upsetting of the very foundations of the government to settle the question forever.

A brief survey of this last great epoch in the formation of modern England will complete our study of the foundations of English literature. Fortunately, the whole literary history of the period, as well as much of its political and religious life, is embodied in the career of a single man. The writings of John Milton in prose and verse form a complete history of the Puritan age and furnish the best possible interpretation of Puritanism.

1. John Milton (1608–1674)

Authorities. **Masson,** *Life and Times of John Milton,* is the supreme authority, and his *Poetical Works of John Milton* is the standard edition. The most helpful of the minor lives of Milton are **Pattison's** in English Men of Letters Series, **Brooke's** in Classical Writers Series, and **Garnett's** in Great Writers Series. **Verity,** *Cambridge Milton;* **Masson,** Globe edition; **St. John,** *Milton's Prose Works* (Bohn), and **Arber,** Reprint of *Areopagitica,* are indispensable helps. Among the great mass of literature about the poet may be mentioned **Addison,** *Criticism of Paradise Lost;* **Coleridge,** *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton;* **Masson,** *Three Devils and other Essays;* **Myers,**

Introduction to Milton's Prose, and **Johnson's, Macaulay's, M. Arnold's, Channing's, Emerson's, Dowden's, Bagehot's**, and **Lowell's** essays on Milton. For a more complete bibliography, see **Garnett**, *Life of Milton*, and **Welsh**, *English Masterpiece Course*.

"Milton's life," says his biographer Pattison, "is a drama in three acts." What is more, it is a drama that coincides almost perfectly with the three acts of the great Puritan tragedy. Its first period was one of transition and preparation. The dreams of the Renaissance faded slowly. Many of the beauties of the Elizabethan period had entered into even the sternest Puritan homes. Milton's father was a lover of art and music and classic poetry. But the external glory which played over the period could not conceal its underlying falseness, its sham and impurity. The Puritan revolt, in its beginning at least, was honest. There was need of revolt if England was not to follow in the footsteps of Italy. The Puritans began by denouncing the most glaring evils, — the extravagance in dress, the vain love of show, the shameless immorality of the playhouses, the abuses of the Church, and finally the bigotry and intolerance of the sovereign. There was little of fanaticism in the earliest days of the movement. Good Puritans there were who delighted in Shakespeare and the drama, and who loved art and literature and all that was beautiful. But the second and third generations of Puritans were narrower and less tolerant men.

Milton's First Period, 1608–1639. During the first thirty years of Milton's life he was Elizabethan in his tastes and sympathies. He was born in London; his father, a scrivener in good circumstances, a broad-minded

and cultured Puritan, spared no expense to give his son a liberal and well-rounded education. He furnished him with the best of tutors and in due time sent him to Cambridge for the full term of seven years. The young student was then ready for a profession, but neither divinity nor the law had attractions for him. He would continue his studies with no definite aim; he would retire into seclusion to live with his favorite writers and dream in the true Elizabethan way of a great poem more ambitious even than Spenser's. His father listened to this most unpuritanical request, and allowed his son for six years to do his sweet will among the books and the rural scenes of his country estate at Horton, seventeen miles from London. The spell of romantic beauty was upon the young student. External nature he noted but little; he lived wholly in the world of books. He read far into the night the Hebrew and Greek and Latin classics; he read the English Bible, the King James Version of which was then among the new books; he read Spenser, who himself had been half a Puritan, and he meditated upon a vast, romantic, moral epic of Arthur and the Round Table. Had he been born half a century earlier he would have given us another *Faerie Queene*.

He wrote comparatively little. He believed his whole life long that poetry should spring from a life that had been especially prepared and fully ripened. But the period was by no means fruitless. In college he had written several lyrics,—*On the Death of a Fair Infant*, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, *At a Solemn Music*,—over-rich, perhaps, in imagery, and full of youthful extravagance, and conceits borrowed

1634. L'Allegro.
Il Penseroso.
Arcades.
Comus.
1638. Lycidas.

from the metaphysical school of poets that was beginning to dominate English poetry. The lines, for instance,

> So when the sun in bed
> Curtained with cloudy red
> Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,

might have been written by Donne. Yet were they marvelous productions for a mere youth at school. Few poets of the world at twenty-one have reached such poetic heights; the harmony of such a stanza as this in *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* is not inferior to the noblest chords of *Paradise Lost :*

> Ring out, ye crystal spheres!
> Once bless our human ears,
> If ye have power to touch our senses so;
> And let your silver chime
> Move in melodious time;
> And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow;
> And with your ninefold harmony
> Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

From his seclusion at Horton he sent forth a few perfect lyrics,—*L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the literary recreations of a sensitive, meditative youth who has lived long amid poets and sages, whose mind is as yet unruffled by the world's cares and problems, who looks out upon life over his book in the calm seclusion and Sabbath stillness of his country retreat. There is not a trace in these perfect lyrics of the metaphysical school; they are almost wholly Elizabethan in their spirit and form. They ring with a melody of marvelous sweetness; they are spontaneous and full of the spirit of mere sensuous delight in

life; they are the last full notes of the true Elizabethan poetry.

But Milton had none of the lawlessness and the carelessness of the future that mark the older Elizabethans. His Puritan training had ever been a ruling force in his life. At college, on account of his conscience and his chastity, he had been called "the Lady of Christ's." In his sonnet written at the age of twenty-three he had revealed the depths of his heart. I would live, he declares,

> As ever in my great task-master's eye.

He was not wholly lost in his books and his dreams. Echoes from the great religious struggle, which was becoming more and more passionate, reached his retreat, and they stirred in him all the Puritan instincts that had been his birthright. In *Comus*, a masque written for the celebration at Ludlow Castle of the arrival of the Earl of Bridgewater as Lord-Lieutenant of the Welsh Marches, we find the point of transition from the Elizabethan to the Puritan. He who was to become a leader in the Puritan ranks throws his soul into a dramatic poem,—a masque, the most luxurious and decadent form of the drama. But in it planted deep we find the seeds of revolt. It is full of earnest pleading for a higher morality. Comus and his sensual crew, with their glistening apparel and their heads of swine, stand for the spirit of vileness and revelry against which Puritanism was fighting. The lady rescued from their power is Milton's ideal of chastity and uprightness. The moral is everywhere obvious,—

> Mortals that would follow me
> Love virtue; she alone is free.

It is a noble poem. It was the last and the greatest of the English masques. Its chasteness and its classic beauty, the melody of its blank verse, and the purity of its message place it among the few perfect dramatic poems of the language.

During the four years after *Comus* the poet made rapid strides toward open rebellion. In *Lycidas*, which in many respects is the most perfect creation of Milton, and indeed of English poetry, we find open hints of militant Puritanism. The poet fiercely denounces the corruption of the Church, the throngs

> of such as for their bellies' sake
> Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold.

"The hungry sheep," he declares, "look up and are not fed." But the day of reckoning is coming,

> But that two-handed engine at the door
> Stands ready to smite once and smite no more.

Already the grim and terribly earnest soldiers of Cromwell were stalking over the land. The second period of Puritanism was at hand. "*Lycidas*," says Pattison, "is the elegy of much more than Edward King; it is the last note of the inspiration of an age that was passing away." With *Lycidas* the Elizabethan period culminated and came to an end.

Milton was waxing more and more warlike, but he had not yet parted wholly with the Elizabethans. *Lycidas* ended with the half promise

> To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new,

but to-morrow never came. To complete his education,

the poet in 1638 visited the continent. For over a year he wandered chiefly in Italy, where he met the most notable men of his age and where he found food in abundance for his intellect and his imagination. But the news from home became more and more alarming. The Puritan revolt was reaching its crisis. "While I was desirous," he wrote, "to cross into Sicily and Greece, the sad news of Civil War in England called me back; for I considered it base that, while my fellow-countrymen were fighting at home for liberty I should be traveling abroad at ease for intellectual culture." He would join actively in the cause of civil and religious liberty, even though it meant the sacrifice of all his fondest dreams. The first period of his life had come to an end.

The Second Period, 1639–1660. From a meditative, beauty-loving youth dallying with Latin meters, dreaming of romantic epics, saturating himself with classic lore, and weaving graceful lyrics of more than Italian beauty, Milton now became changed into a fierce controversialist, a writer of pamphlets, a hurler of prose invective against the enemies of the Commonwealth. Puritanism had entered upon its militant era, and it drew Milton with it. The storm swept away the last vestige of the Elizabethan spirit. The penner of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* was now tossed amid fierce waves; the hoarse roar of tumult drowned for a time the poetry in his soul. Only a few sonnets, some of them, like "Avenge, O Lord, Thy Slaughtered Saints," mere roars of anger, came from the poet's pen. For twenty years he wallowed through this fearful bog of controversy, and when in 1660 at the collapse of the Commonwealth he emerged, he had lost the spontaneous joy, the Elizabethan fire of his earlier

period, and he could now rail at Shakespeare and call such a book as Sidney's *Arcadia* "a vain amatorious poem." The last spark of the Italian Renaissance was fast dying out of English literature. But Milton counted not the cost. He threw his whole soul into the battle for liberty. No sacrifice was too great. He was warned by his physician that to continue to use his eyes would result in total blindness. His party called for a reply to the attack of the learned Salmasius, and Milton deliberately wrote it at the cost of his eyesight. Had the Commonwealth continued, and had it needed the full time of the great Puritan, there would have been no *Paradise Lost*. He would have sacrificed even the dream of his youth.

The keynote to Milton's prose writings is Liberty,—social, domestic, civil, religious liberty. He recognized fully the value of the individual,—the liberty of every man to make the most of himself. His pamphlets on divorce arose from his own unhappy married life. They are an honest plea for individual liberty against a law that allowed no exceptions. His *Areopagitica* is a magnificent appeal for a free and unlicensed press, and his political and religious tracts plead for freedom from lifeless forms and old traditions. But Milton, despite his earnestness and sacrifice, accomplished little by his prose. Almost all that he did was to furnish fuel for the controversy that was raging so fiercely. The work in which he ruined his eyes did no practical good; all of his tracts were quickly swept into the great dust-heap of that most voluminous and bitter of pamphlet ages, and they would have passed into quick oblivion had their author not in later years written *Paradise Lost*.

One who has read only Milton's poetry has difficulty to believe that many of these prose works came from the same pen that wrote the sublime lines of the great epic. They are full of coarse personal abuse, of rancorous and shrill invective, of epithets that well-nigh pass belief. Here and there, however, as in *Areopagitica*, there are passages that are truly sublime. Milton had not the aphoristic style of Bacon, or the flowing and graceful periods of Hooker, but he had a marvelous command of the resources of the language. He gives one constantly the impression of unlimited power, of sweep, of sublime rage. He is not always easy reading; he is diffuse at times; he delights in ponderous Latinized words, and in sentences long and involved even to obscurity, but one cannot read a page without being thrilled and awed by its power and its earnestness. "In him throbbed the pulse of the historic movement of his age," and one as he reads cannot long escape the resistless onrush of the writer's tremendous convictions.

The Third Period, 1660–1674. The year 1660, that witnessed the fall of the Commonwealth and the reëstablishment of the old royal line, divides as with a knife-cut the life-history of Milton and of Puritanism. His work as Latin Secretary and general propagandist to the Puritan government came suddenly to an end. In a moment he became an outlaw, in peril of his life. He beheld his late companions dispersed into exile, fiercely hunted, brought to prison and execution, and he saw the political fabric to which he had given his eyesight and the twenty best years of his life, rent and scattered like a morning cloud. His property had been swept away, and now, poor and blind, with old age creeping upon him, with the dream of

his manhood forever shattered, he settled down, a pathetic, lonely figure, to spend his last days. But despite all he was unconquered. He would return to his early dream and sing

> With mortal voice, unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,
> On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues,
> In darkness, and with dangers compassed round
> And solitude.

Few would listen to his song. About him echoed

> the barbarous dissonance
> Of Bacchus and his revelers, the race
> Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
> In Rhodope.

Though the savage clamor of his times threatened to drown both harp and voice he would still work on "and fit audience find though few."

Thus grew the immortal epic, *Paradise Lost*, a poem that stands solitary in our literature. There is in it not a trace of the Elizabethan rapture and self-abandonment, not a trace of the Augustan classicism and self-consciousness. It is a blend between the Hebraism of early Puritanism and the Hellenism of the Italian Renaissance. It is the record of the life-history of its creator. Had Milton failed to pass through just the training that fate had meted out to him the poem would have been impossible. It was written in the only moment in English history when such a creation could have been made and by the only man who had received the requisite discipline. His Puritan training, his familiarity with the Eng-

lish Bible, had led to the conception of the poem; his early studies in classic literature had made possible its form and imagery; the fierce drama of the Commonwealth had given it its intensity and vivid reality; the collapse of the Puritan ideal, which had been the dream of his youth, together with his own personal danger, had given it a tremendous actuality in his life; and his years of loneliness and brooding, and above all his blindness, that had kept his mental eye fixed upon the world of his dreams, had given it a sublimity and an unworldliness that no other English poem has ever approached.

The poem lives in another world from that occupied by the purely Elizabethan creations. It was the result of self-criticism, of careful preparation, of deliberate art. Shakespeare, the typical Elizabethan, had poured out in profusion "his native wood-notes wild." So full had he been of creative energy that, after once the glow and passion of creation had passed away, he had not given a thought to his productions. His work has come down to us garbled and mutilated. There is hardly a page that we can feel sure remains as it left his hand. But Milton wrote with exceeding care. His whole life had been a preparation for his poem. He had read the classics of the world as a preliminary discipline, and they may all be found in his great masterpiece. A set of notes explaining fully all allusions and all origins in *Paradise Lost* would be a complete biblical and classical dictionary. He worked with deliberation. Even the proof-reading of the poem — the spelling and punctuation — was done with minutest care. The book is peculiarly a life-work, and all that its author could do for it he did.

It is needless, in view of the vast amount of eminent

criticism, to attempt a detailed analysis of *Paradise Lost.* Its sublimity, its vastness, its mighty organ-tones, have been noted by all critics. Its most striking characteristic is, perhaps, its loneliness. It was an emanation from one "whose soul was like a star and dwelt apart." It has had little influence upon later poetry; no imitation of it has ever been possible. It stands like a vast mountain peak, lonely and sublime, the supreme achievement of English literature.

Two other poems—*Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*—followed *Paradise Lost*, but both are inferior to the great masterpiece. *Paradise Regained*, in literary art at least, is well-nigh perfect, but it lacks the intensity, the sense of actuality, the sublimity of the earlier poem. In *Samson Agonistes*, a tragedy of blindness, we have Milton's last poetic task. In form and spirit it is severely classic; the poet confessedly models it upon the Greek masters of tragedy. In its general effect it is strong and moving, especially in the passages that exhibit the once mighty Samson, now blinded and weakened, the sport of his enemies. Its autobiographical import is obvious. It was a fitting end for the poetic labors of the great Puritan.

1667, 1674. Paradise Lost.
1671. Paradise Regained.
1671. Samson Agonistes.

"*The Age of Prose and Reason.*" To turn from Milton to the crowd of common singers that filled the period is like leaving the vast and solemn cathedral with its hush and its awe, its mighty organ, its presence of the sacred dead, and rushing into the babble and the clatter of the streets. The quarter-century before the fall of the Commonwealth had been full of writers, and a few of them, like JEREMY TAYLOR, "the Shakespeare of the pulpit,"

the most inspired of prose writers, ROBERT HERRICK, the last of the lyrists, SIR THOMAS BROWNE, the author of *Religio Medici*, and JOHN BUNYAN, whose *Pilgrim's Progress* ranks with the English people second only to the Bible, were men of commanding power, but none of them added anything really new to the foundations of English literature. Even Bunyan, the strongest and most inspired of them all, owed his power almost wholly to the English Bible, which he knew literally by heart. The minor writers contented themselves with merely echoing the great music which was passing so rapidly away, or with sounding weak and decadent notes that are now forgotten.

With the beginning of the new monarchy there opened a new period in English literature, one utterly distinct and individual. The creators of the Elizabethan period seemed to the writers of the Restoration to belong to a distant past. Shakespeare and his school were now regarded as the children of a barbarous age,—marvelously gifted, even inspired, yet fatally defective in art and in all that made for refinement. The new era of analysis, of propriety, of self-control and self-criticism, had opened. It was, to quote Matthew Arnold, "the age of prose and reason," of self-satisfaction and complacent conformity to rule. To the disciples of Dryden it was manifest that "English had never been properly and purely written until Waller and Denham arose." Literary form was now everything. It mattered not so much what, as how. Prose began more and more to take the place once held by poetry. The new interest in individual life led to biography, which now became voluminous; the new rules of literary art led to criticism; the two together led to

the analysis of moods and emotions and all those studies of individual subjective phenomena that have sprung from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. A new literary dictator had arisen whose rules cramped English poetry into iron forms until a century and more of growth was needed to bring it back into its native shape. Until the rise of Wordsworth and the Romantic poets the school of Dryden and Pope had full control of English literature.

THE END

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